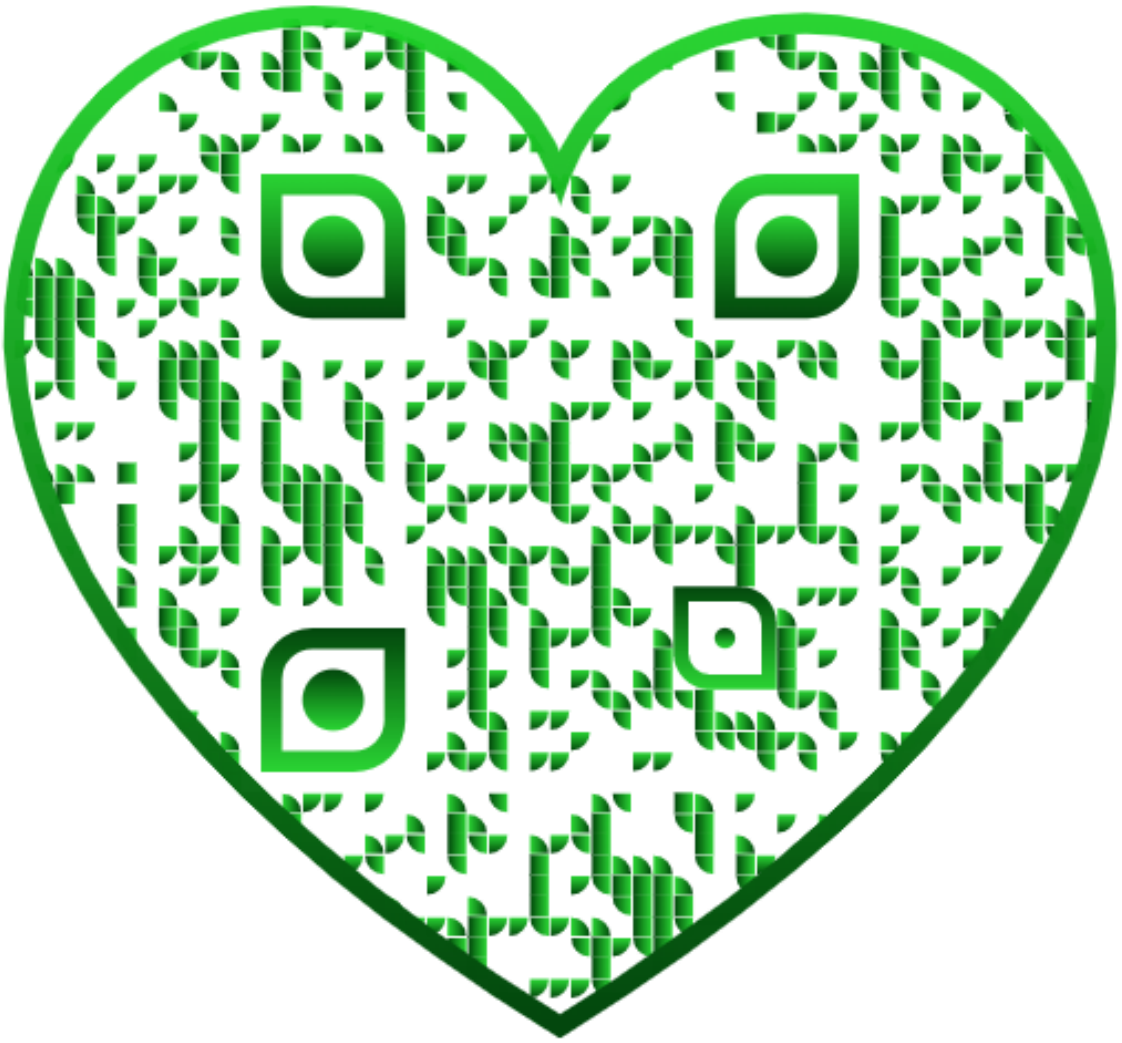
TOBIAS WAYLAND
THE
LAKE MICHIGAN
MOTHMAN
HIGH STRANGENESS IN THE MIDWEST



THE LAKE MICHIGAN MOTHMAN

HIGH STRANGENESS IN THE MIDWEST

To Emily, without whom this would have been written somewhere in the internet using green text on a black background.

The Lake Michigan Mothman: High Strangeness in the Midwest
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INTRODUCTION

The world first heard of the Mothman in November of 1966, when a series of sightings of a large, black, flying creature with glowing red eyes took place in and around Point Pleasant, West Virginia. The sightings ostensibly culminated in the collapse of the Silver Bridge, and to this day there are some that maintain the creature's appearance was a portent to the disaster.

On December 15th, 1967, the Silver Bridge, which spanned the Ohio River between Point Pleasant, West Virginia, and Gallipolis, Ohio, buckled and collapsed. 46 people died when the bridge gave way during the rush hour. The bridge’s catastrophic failure was officially due to a faulty eyebar in the suspension chain, but some feel that the eerie flying humanoid haunting the area might be connected to its collapse, especially since the sightings associated with that flap [AC1]seemed to end after the disaster.

Author John Keel claimed to have received prophetic messages from an unknown entity while investigating the unusual events leading up to the disaster, even going so far as to prepare for a widespread blackout along the East Coast based on these weird warnings. Keel was later horrified to learn of the Silver Bridge tragedy that occurred around the same time as the portended blackout, which itself never came to pass.

The tragedy at the Silver Bridge is, to date, the only recorded disaster to be associated with Mothman wherein the creature was sighted prior to the

unfortunate event; although folkloric accounts exist saying that Mothman was present at many historic disasters. According to cryptozoologist, researcher, and author Loren Coleman, these later stories are based on events taken from fictional sources, such as *The Mothman Prophecies* feature film, that have made their way into the Mothman's mythology.

“The Chernobyl story, the Galveston Hurricane-Mothman tie-in, and other examples given in the 2002 movie were pure fiction […] right after the movie was released, various websites posted the Chernobyl/Mothman reports as factual. But there is not one thread of evidence that any winged weirdies were witnessed before the Chernobyl accident. It is a bit of movie fiction that has, unfortunately, moved into pseudo-factoid cryptozoology," said Coleman.

Still, many people believe that the Mothman was a harbinger of that particular disaster in Point Pleasant, and that perhaps his appearances ended with the tragedy, although there’s little evidence to support the claim. In fact, thanks to an influx of weird, winged creature sightings starting in Chicago in the spring of 2017, there’s evidence to show that the sightings never really stopped at all. They simply shifted slightly, sliding ethereally over to another geographic location with a history of high strangeness—Lake Michigan.

PROLOGUE

October 27th, 1969, less than two years after the Silver Bridge’s collapse seemingly signaled the end of Mothman’s reign of terror over Point Pleasant, West Virginia, young Floyd Hancock lay asleep in the small room he shared with his infant sister in his family’s trailer just outside of Rolling Prairie, Indiana. Recent damage to their home had left a hole in the living room ceiling that went clear through the roof, which the family had covered with a tarp until it could be repaired.

Perhaps it was the “strange noise” or “disagreeable odor” he noticed immediately upon waking that had interrupted his slumber; or, perhaps, it was some other aspect of the tall, winged humanoid looming over his sister’s bed that was responsible. Floyd froze in shock, taking in the full measure of the beast as it slowly turned to face him. The creature might have been between seven and eight feet tall—it was hard to tell with its crouched

posture—but its “huge, leathery wings” and muscular limbs were apparent; so too was its face: thin and skeletal, with “sharp teeth and dark eyes.”

He screamed for his parents then, like any of us would have, but they didn’t come. Only Floyd’s grandmother, who was staying with the family, responded to his cry. But she was immediately stricken by the monstrousness of the thing before her and fell to her knees, stunned. The monster crossed the room and lifted Floyd into its arms, his grandmother helpless to prevent it. Floyd was swept up and away by the winged beast, which carried him into the living room and out through the hole into the night air. He remembers being cold and wet as the creature flew higher, the panicked screams of his grandmother fading in the distance—and then nothing. Floyd woke up in his bed sometime later to the terrified faces of his parents and grandmother.

Floyd’s parents had been put into some sort of hypnotic trance during his abduction, regaining their senses only after the monster had absconded with their son. They waited in frigid anxiety for several minutes that seemed to stretch into eternity, afraid to call the police with such a wild tale. Soon enough the frantic family heard scratching on the roof, followed by a solid thud. Floyd’s father climbed on top of the trailer to investigate the noises and found him there, unconscious. He was brought inside, dried off, and placed back in his bed. They never contacted the authorities or sought medical attention out of fear of the questions that might be raised.

CHAPTER ONE
THE MOTHMAN COMETH

It was the end of April, 2017 when I first heard about the winged creature sightings in Chicago, although I didn’t start covering the story until early May. If I had known then what I know now, I would have done things a lot differently, but I didn’t, so this is what I did instead.

The whole affair started innocently enough: three reports had been submitted to the Mutual UFO Network's (MUFON) sighting report database, each one describing slight variations on a theme; some sort of giant winged creature causing fear and confusion among the residents of America's third largest city. The reports came in within a week of each other, and MUFON bundled them all up and put them in an article on their website. "Mothman-Type Creature Reported over Chicago" the headline declared; naturally, I was intrigued.

The sightings reportedly occurred between 10 p.m. April 15th and 2 a.m. April 16th. They were reported out of chronological order, so I decided to organize them by time and date instead of by when they hit MUFON's reporting center. The first sighting, MUFON case report 83325, was reported by a woman who said she'd been out on Lake Michigan with her husband and two other couples celebrating a friend's birthday. They were just off of Montrose Beach when, at about 10 p.m., she glanced up and saw "what looked like a giant bat". It was definitely not a fox bat, she decided later after doing a little research into large bat species.

"This bat was as tall as my husband, who is 6-foot, 4-inches, or even bigger," she said. "It was solid black with eyes that seemed to reflect the moonlight. This bat was blacker than the surrounding night sky and was perfectly silhouetted against the moonlit sky. This bat circled the boat three times in complete silence before heading off towards Montrose. It quickly blended into the night sky and was gone in seconds."

According to the report, a bright green object traveling north to south at the horizon was seen about five minutes after the creature flew off.

"It was not a plane, as it was brilliant green and was moving slowly across the horizon," she added. "If I had to estimate, it was about two miles from our position. After the object was out of sight, we sat there looking around in stunned silence. I began feeling this overwhelming sensation of dread and told my husband that I felt that it was prudent that we get off the water as quickly as possible. I tried to get a picture of the thing as it circled our boat, but all I got was black."

The second report, Case 83243, took place thirty minutes later, at 10:30 p.m. The witness was said to be "hanging out with my boys and a few friends" in Chicago at the time of the sighting.

"As we talked about work and our families, we heard what sounded like a bird flapping its wings," the witness wrote. "One of my homies yelled

out that he saw a huge Lechuza over by the road. We walked over there and saw what looked like a big owl. As we walked up on it, this owl stood up on two feet and looked right at us. We saw what looked like a huge Lechuza, except it was about six feet tall and really big. It had large glowing red eyes that were completely freaking everybody out. We all yelled and this thing took off into the air and took off toward North Avenue. This thing freaked us all out and scared all our kids."

In Mexican folklore a Lechuza is an old woman—often a witch, or *bruja*—who can turn into a giant, black bird. In most stories, the bird is an owl, but sometimes it is described as an eagle.

The third report, Case 83206, occurred at 2 a.m. on April 16th, 2017. "I arrived for work at 2 a.m. at the Chicago International Produce Market just off Damen and as I walked across the parking lot a bunch of guys (4-5 guys) were staring up at the sky," wrote the night's final witness. "I looked up and saw the biggest freaking owl I have ever seen! I'm 6-foot, 2-inches, and I'm guessing this thing was at least a foot taller than me. It was completely black except for it having bright yellowish/reddish eyes like a cat."

"It stood there for a minute or two staring at everyone before shooting up into the sky and disappearing," he continued. "It made everyone feel very uneasy and only took off after some guys threw some rocks at it."

The witness said that the creature "had wings on it like an owl, only bigger and you could hear it flap those wings when it took off. It made this sound as it took off and flew away that sounded like a truck's brakes when they are burned out."

He and his coworkers watched the thing as it flew away.

"It flew up and flew a wide circle, making that sound once more and then flew off in the direction of the Stevenson Expressway," he said. "We stood around and looked for it for a few minutes, but it never came back.

Like many witnesses, this one was adamant that the impossible event he had just seen remain on the periphery of his life; if there is one inarguable facet of these encounters, it is the fear they generate.

"I'm reporting this because there is no way this was an owl. It stood upright like a man, just really, really tall," he stated. "I don't want to discuss this with anyone and would prefer to remain anonymous. I don't imagine anyone would believe me anyways. One of the guys I work with who saw this thing said that it made him feel very uneasy, like a scared kid, and he was glad someone threw a rock and made it fly away."

MUFON was the first to compare the sightings to the events of Point Pleasant, but they were also the first to advise caution in our assumptions.

"This account is taken merely from the early witness reports filed with MUFON," they said. "Please remain skeptical until witness interviews have been conducted and more case evidence is assembled."

Illinois MUFON State Director Sam Maranto and his staff were assigned to investigate on the organization's behalf.

I met Sam at the 2017 Milwaukee Paranormal Conference in October of the same year. He's a very pleasant man who speaks very quickly and adamantly when excited—which is often when discussing the sort of impossibilities that are our business.

Sam told me then that he thought there wasn't much to the reports they'd received, that the reported details just didn't match any verifiable facts; the moon wouldn't have been visible on April 15th, and two out of the three reports allegedly came from the same IP address.

I checked the historical weather data myself, and while the moon was waning gibbous and the sky was partly cloudy, moonrise that night was at 11:45 p.m.; so either the witness was incorrect about the timing of the event, the details regarding the reflection of moonlight and the creature's silhouette against the sky were embellished, or she mistook a different light source for the moon.

The matching IP addresses were static, Sam recalled, meaning they don't change based on who's using them, although I'm not certain how he knew that. In fact, I don't know how MUFON knew any of the IP addresses, and it wasn't for lack of asking. People have a real knack for declaring an answer without sharing their work, especially in this field.

I won't say that the matching IP addresses weren't suspicious, because they were, but they could also have had a reasonable explanation. An IP address found through email, for instance, will usually only tell you which of the mail provider's addresses the message has passed through—the big companies like Google won't include the message's originating IP address. Two emails from Chicago being bounced through the same server doesn't sound so strange to me.

Sam mentioned, too, that only one of the witnesses had given them accurate contact information, and that they hadn't returned any of MUFON's calls, texts, or emails. Not a great way to convince an organization of your sincerity. Plenty of witnesses have done the same to me over the years, and I

believe it's important to be clear how much contact you've had with the person submitting the report—far too many cases are taken as gospel that could just as well be someone's creative writing project. I don't know that that's what happened here, but I also don't know that it didn't.

If these were the only reports anyone received, I'd have written a single article about them and been done with the whole affair, just another one for the "shrug" file—but it wasn't, not by a long shot; the MUFON reports were only the beginning. The Mothman had come to Chicago.

CHAPTER TWO
NAME RECOGNITION

Back then I didn't recognize the names Phantoms & Monsters or UFO Clearinghouse, let alone Lon Strickler and Manuel Navarette, although we'd become more than familiar in the ensuing months. I'd been out of the game for a while, investigating on my own prior to Emily and I starting the Singular Fortean Society. Sure, I had read Keel and Vallee, but I had no idea whom people were reading now, especially not on the internet.

I decided to call Lon for an interview in June of 2017, after the tenth sighting was reported.

I didn't know what to expect when I called Lon. The only thing I knew about him was that some of the recent flying humanoid sightings in Chicago were being reported to his website, Phantoms & Monsters.

I found Lon to be an affable man, who spoke very assuredly in his Pennsylvania accent.

"I don't really know what people are seeing," he said, right off the

bat.

That was understandable, considering the reported sightings defied all reasonable belief.

Despite their intrinsic strangeness, Lon told me he didn't think the witnesses with whom he had spoken were making it up.

"These reports have been very specific," he explained. "Even when I prodded them to embellish, they wouldn't. They haven't embellished."

"I don't think people are imagining it, and they come from all different ranges of lifestyles," he added.

At that time, separate reports had been sent to MUFON, UFO Clearinghouse, and Phantoms & Monsters. Lon told me he'd been working with UFO Clearinghouse to investigate the sightings, but so far MUFON hadn't been much help.

"We've been trying to reach them through MUFON," said Lon of the three witnesses whose sighting reports spanned overnight April 15th into the next morning. "Seems MUFON hasn't been able to interview them as well."

I wasn't particularly surprised; I knew from my own experience as an investigator that often submitting the initial report was all the contact a witness wanted. Still, that didn't bode well for MUFON's investigation, and I wanted to know if Lon's luck had been better.

Lon told me that the stories witnesses had related to him were remarkably consistent, and the proximity and pattern of the sightings were clear and measurable. At the time, Lon thought through his analysis of the data that the creature was moving north along the lakefront into the city and back south again. That didn't explain how it seemed to appear and disappear at will, or how more people hadn't seen something described as a seven-to-eight-foot bat-like flying humanoid winging its way around the USA's third largest city.

"At this point now, with the reports I've received, I don't think it's natural," mused Lon. "I think it's coming from somewhere else. I think it's more supernatural than anything."

Furthermore, he said he thought it possible that "people who witness it are predisposed to see it. Certain people can see it, and certain people cannot."

That certainly would explain a lot.

He went on to talk about how maybe the winged weirdo could be multiple beings, or shapeshifting in some way, because witnesses alternated

between comparing its appearance to that of an owl or a bat.

"It could just be that people see things differently, too," he admitted.

It might even be interdimensional, said Lon, and he informed me of several strange light effects he felt could be related. There had been a few unexplained flashes of light reported in the city, and one of the three sightings reported to MUFON did involve a strange green light over Lake Michigan.

There had already been a few UFO sightings over Lake Michigan that year, although that's not unusual for the area. Chicago has had its share of UFO sightings in the past, such as the famous saucer seen over O'Hare airport in 2006. More and more researchers are starting to speculate on an interdimensional origin to UFOs, and it's not much of a leap from that to attributing the same to the creatures so often associated with them.

The only thing we were sure of was that this was the largest concentration of flying humanoid sightings since the Mothman phenomenon hit Point Pleasant back in the '60s. I asked Lon if he thought there might be a connection.

"Do I think it's a harbinger?" he repeated my question, pondering it briefly.

"I've talked to two well-known psychics, and they believe that there very well may be a disaster in Chicago," he said. "I'm an intuitive, and I pictured a major bridge collapse in 2017."

"People who are sensitive have contacted me and believe the sightings are pretty ominous," continued Lon. "People I trust and believe have received a vision that something ominous will happen in the future. The month of August."

It's frustrating, he told me, because predicting a disaster is like "being stuck between a rock and a hard place." If you're right, then people suspect you were involved, and if you're not, then you can expect to be mocked.

"I don't usually say anything," he said. "It really does work on you."

That bridge collapse never came, and we're still waiting on whatever disaster is supposed to befall Chicago to signal the end of its Mothman sightings; although as time passes, I'm beginning to think that ominous warnings were never what any of this was about, not even in West Virginia.

I interviewed Manuel the following month.

"We're working really hard on this," he said to me over the phone.

He told me about how his team of investigators was trying a new tactic to chase down information on the mysterious flying creature that had been reported all summer in Chicago. They'd been canvassing the area of the sightings and speaking to the homeless people that live there.

"They live in that area—they see stuff on a daily basis," explained Manuel.

It was an interesting idea, but unfortunately it never paid off. The homeless residents with whom they spoke were less than helpful, either asking for money or offering nothing in the way of useful information.

Manuel had a clear interest in involving the community in the investigation; it's why he created UFO Clearinghouse in the first place.

"I want to give people a way to submit these sightings," said Manuel. "UFO Clearinghouse gives them a way to report anonymously."

I appreciated that approach at the time, and still do, in fact; privacy is important to many witnesses, who feel as though their careers or personal lives may be put at risk by being publicly attached to a subject like UFOs or creature sightings.

But there was something more pressing than confidentiality on my mind at the time, despite a tangential relation to the subject. A recently reported case was getting a lot of attention, but so far none of its leads had panned out.

A person claiming to be a police officer had contacted Manuel and said that on the night of June 29th he had seen "a large creature that...looked like a dark black shadow with wings" in the Auburn Gresham neighborhood of Chicago. The witness further claimed that he was reluctant to come forward because of his profession, but said that he had filed a report at his station per police procedure, and that at the urging of his son, he submitted his testimony of what he had seen to UFO Clearinghouse.

Yet when Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests were submitted to obtain the report, Manuel and other researchers—myself included—were told that no such report existed. That could mean that no report was ever filed, but according to Manuel, it might have meant something else entirely. He told me that he'd spoken to members of the media, and they had assured him that they were aware of the flying humanoid reports, but had chosen not to cover the story.

"Members of the media have said to me 'We want to cover the story," said Manuel, "but we've been told not to because it will cause

panic.’”

Manuel found the obfuscation comforting, in a way, due to the sensitive nature of investigating the unexplained.

“It’s kind of a good thing,” he explained. “I don’t want another Stevensville, Texas. We don’t want reality shows here muddying the waters. I’m glad [the Chicago Police Department] has kept a lid on this.”

By July of 2017, less than three months after the first reported sightings to MUFON, a flood of offers had already begun from amateur investigators volunteering to help. In every case, Manuel declined.

“I have to turn them down,” he told me. “We already have procedure, and we just don’t need them muddying the data.”

I agreed with him on that point then and I still do now. Especially as the investigation garnered more and more attention, self-appointed investigators and paranormal ‘experts’ came out of the woodwork to try and attach their names to the case. It was something of a learning experience for me; until then I had assumed everybody was as passionate about these topics as I am, it never occurred to me that as many people might be hunting celebrity as were hunting monsters.

Drones and skydivers in wing suits were popular skeptical explanations very early in the investigation, and I appreciated how Manuel had already been exploring those hypotheses.

“Chicago is very strict as to what they let into their airspace,” Manuel said. “There is a ‘no fly zone’ miles out over Lake Michigan. Drones are strictly prohibited along the lake front, which keeps the area pure.”

Wing suits are similarly banned, he said.

Manuel consulted an expert on wing suits, who expressed doubt as to whether the maneuvers attributed to the flying humanoid would even be possible. The expert told him that the kind of maneuverability needed to, say, quickly gain enough altitude to fly over a bridge—as reported by a family near Chicago’s river walk—simply wouldn’t be possible so low to the ground. That area of Chicago, too, is, as he puts it, in “very heavy use.”

“[Someone wearing a wing suit] would have hit a bridge, roadway, building; something,” said Manuel.

Nor did he think that the sightings could be explained as a misidentified animal. There aren’t any owls big enough in the area, and even the largest owls in the world aren’t the size of what was being reported.

“These would be some massive owls,” he chuckled.

Manuel similarly dismissed the idea that migrating sandhill cranes might be to blame.

"They're birds," he said. "You can tell they're birds. It's got a contour, and the wings are feathered. You can tell it's feathered."

"Cranes have long legs, and they make noise," he explained. "It just doesn't match any of the descriptions."

I should have asked him about herons, then, but I didn't. That part would come later after I'd done more research.

He wasn't really wrong, though, most of the descriptions didn't match any birds—even herons—and they still don't today.

It was good to speak to someone with knowledge of the area, and I learned a lot from our conversation. Some of the difficulties endemic to the investigation hadn't even occurred to me; some of the neighborhoods in which the sightings took place can be dangerous, especially at night, and since the creature was most often seen at dusk or after nightfall, seeing it in action could be a difficult proposition.

And then, of course, there were the usual difficulties, like the witnesses who would all too often disappear after limited contact with investigators.

"They might answer a few questions, and then radio silence," said Manuel.

But that was no reason to quit, and Lon and Manuel kept plugging away, taking reports and following up when and where they could. It didn't take long until a team of likeminded investigators had formed around them, all working together to investigate the sightings from a variety of angles. I was formally introduced to that group by a mutual friend, and soon after I'd published these interviews I was on the team.

That friend eventually left the group on bad terms. The exact details are outside the scope of this work, but suffice it to say that I understand why it happened, and maybe even why it needed to, although I didn't like it. Just remember, whenever you hear someone criticizing an investigation, that's when you need to be at your most skeptical of what they're saying about it, because drama haunts the paranormal as much as ghosts and monsters do, and everybody has an agenda.

I like to think mine is the truth.

CHAPTER THREE
TIME IS ON OUR SIDE

There were over four dozen sightings of a winged humanoid around

the lakefront in 2017, almost all of them from Chicago. From there the reports spread like a virus outward into Illinois and even farther afield, until every state bordering Lake Michigan had them. It wasn't long before people who'd had their experiences years—even decades—earlier were coming forward, the recent attention to the case having convinced them that maybe they weren't crazy after all, or at the very least they weren't alone.

The influx of reports was overwhelming. I needed to make sense of them, put them in some kind of order, and I decided on a timeline. As they came in, I could put each report in its chronological place and feel like maybe there was some sense to be had of it all. I don't know if things really started making sense, or if the phenomenon had simply indoctrinated me into its particular brand of crazy, but as everything was laid out in front of me a picture formed and connections were made—a series of loosely related events that started in Point Pleasant in 1966 and never actually stopped, despite the significance given to the Silver Bridge disaster in '67.

As if in answer to the idea of a Mothman chronology, a witness contacted Lon at the end of 2017 to report her family's own private timeline, claiming they'd been stalked for decades by a shapeshifting flying humanoid throughout the Midwest and southeastern United States—including in the greater metropolitan area of Chicago. Her first sighting was on Racine Street in Chicago in 1970, only one year after a young Floyd Hancock had his run-in with a winged abductor.

"When the witness and I talked, she described that the winged being lived in a vacant warehouse next door to their home on 1751 West Berwyn Street in Chicago's Anderson neighborhood," Lon said. "This occurred during 1970 to 1974, and the being was observed many times by the family. When the family moved, it continued to follow them near their new location."

The witness described it thusly:

It's a shape shifter...but I think its original form is an about seven-foot-tall creature with wings that span six feet or so. It has a goblin-like face and ears with bat-like wings, but way more flexible. It's real dark brown, almost black in color. It has red eyes that almost glow in the dark. It has claw-like feet and very long fingers and arms. Arms are not connected to the wings...they are separate. Wings are more like on its back like a bird's [and it has] a long tail [that's] pointed at the end. It's extremely fast in this form.

Other forms it transforms into are:

- A moth-like creature. In this form its hands and wings are attached and it's closer to six feet tall with long teeth.
- It also takes the form of a bat but bigger...three feet in size with red eyes and black in color with long teeth. It's not super-fast in this form, but faster than a human being.
- It can also take on a goblin-like creature, hands and wings are separate. Gray and black in color with long teeth, human-like hands but long claws and sharp talons on its feet, and [it] drools. Red and brown eyes three and a half feet tall. Slowest form, however it's still as fast as a cat when it needs to move. Licks itself in this form, like it's cleaning its claws. [It] has a tail maybe two feet long.

It has been inside several homes we have lived in. It hates dogs. It perches up high to avoid being seen. It hides in the shadows, like it's stalking you...similar to a feline. It has an odor almost like a musty or moss-like scent. Once you smell it you never forget it. It's mean in nature and likes to show it's in control. No matter the form, it also has a loud screeching sound. It's hard to explain. No... I do not have a photo of it and I cannot explain why my family has seen it so many times. I have no answers but I know it's real.

Example of an incident, which occurred on the Lake Michigan shoreline in north Indiana. I was about 10 years old (around 1977). We had gone to visit my cousins and went fishing. We cleaned the fish at the lake and left the fish heads and scales on the river bank. This being flew down ate the remains. My cousin said as long as you give back it won't bother you. They had seen it several times before.

The lack of physical evidence in these cases can be a tough pill to swallow, but Lon told me himself how impressed he was with the witness' forthrightness and sincerity.

"The being made itself known to the witness after she became an adult. No one has been able to obtain a photograph. Her and the family wish to remain anonymous...though the witness has been very forthcoming to me during our conversation and subsequent follow-up emails. It's obvious to me that she wishes for the encounters to end," he said.

The thing to remember about these events is that they can't be

predicted or prepared for, even if you've experienced the impossible before. Throughout this investigation, and any others like it, there is a question that recurs among everyone who is introduced to it: why aren't there more pictures? The answers are frustratingly simple; it happened too fast, it was too dark, the witness was awestruck or afraid and the thought never even occurred to them—these are the reasons most often given. Consider, too, the phenomenon itself. What if it doesn't want to be photographed? Hell, what if it can't be?

I'm reminded of a brief exchange I had with my friend Michael Nickels-Wisdom.

"I wish people who investigate anomalous experience would not so much concentrate on video recordings," Michael said. "These things are mediations of reality. Of course, even the human mind mediates reality, but the more layers of mediation you add, the farther away you get from the original experience. In my opinion, technological mediations like video recording are culs-de-sac. You cannot get any farther than the mediation, which is an artifact of someone else's experience. There is only one way to get past that dead end, and that is personal experience. The catch is that the only way to convey personal experience to someone else is to present some mediated form of it, and you are right back at the dead end."

I agreed. These are experiential phenomena, and a camera strips away the witness's perspective; replacing it not with an objective one, but with its own. I think that's an important distinction to make. Cameras have their own perception of events, complete with their own intrinsic bias.

I find the experiences of eyewitnesses to be much more compelling, and in these cases the fear reported is consistent. It is a primal, defensive fear, and as we progress through the timeline it will appear again and again. Consider this report from spiritual author Nefer Khepri in which she describes her father's terrifying encounter with a winged being just north of Chicago in 1976.

According to Khepri:

> *I'd like to report second-hand what my Dad saw in 1976. I was 14 at the time.*
>
> *I grew up in Waukegan. My dad worked part-time nights at Victory Memorial Hospital, which I believe is located along Sheridan Rd. After work one night he went to help a friend who had car trouble*

at the Marathon Restaurant, which was located along the train tracks by Johnson Outboard Motor company right on Lake Michigan.

It was a full moon. They were in the parking lot where my dad was giving the guy's car a jump when Dad—as he often told it—suddenly felt scared, as if something was watching them. There were two or more very tall silos there, or some such structure. They were probably three stories high. As dad looked up, in the moonlight he saw a black figure crouched down watching them. It had glowing red eyes. He told his friend to look so they both saw it. Dad said the creature was probably around six feet tall because it was so high up, and even from that angle it looked large. It definitely was not a bird or anything he had ever seen before. Dad said he sensed it was evil, removed the jumper cables, and he and his friend took off in Dad's car. They didn't even bother to lock up his friend's car, they were that frightened.

As they drove off, they heard a loud "swooshing" sound and then something seemed to hit and then slide across the top of my dad's car. He kept going convinced that thing was trying to drive them off the road. The next day Dad was freaking out because you could see three long scratches on the roof of the car. I saw them myself. They were about a quarter inch apart. There were four of them and it looked like the talon of a large bird had scratched the car.

From that point on I was banned from going to the Lake after dark, and my dad didn't even like me going there during the day either. I had never heard of reports of winged creatures until I read your article so just had to share.

I corresponded with Khepri, and she provided me with additional details of her father's sighting.

"My dad got off work at 10 p.m. It's probably a 15-minute drive to the Marathon from the hospital, maybe 20, so I'd estimate the sighting occurred around 10:30 p.m. I remember school had just let out for the summer and it was before my birthday, June 19th," she explained. "My dad always stressed the Moon was full."

Historical weather data revealed that the full moon fell on the 11th of June in 1976, which was a Friday. Moonrise on the 11th was at 8:01 p.m.,

and weather conditions were fair—meaning that the moon would have been high in the sky and visible at 10:30 p.m. that evening, marking it as the likeliest day for the encounter.

Waukegan is a city on the northern edge of Chicago's metropolitan area, directly adjacent to Lake Michigan. It's bordered to the west by the County Forest Preserve and to the northeast by the Illinois Beach Nature Preserve.

Having confirmed the available details and finding them to match Khepri's account, and having those details remain consistent with the pattern of reports received so far, I had no choice but to operate under the assumption that the events occurred as reported—her father's terror was real, and so too was the creature who had caused it.

Two reports received from the 1980s echo the seemingly psychic relationship between the being and the unsuspecting population in which it inspires such terror.

The first such report came in to Lon, and told the story of a man who had experienced a psychic encounter with a thin, black, winged humanoid with "intense red eyes".

"The witness contacted me by email and asked to speak by telephone," Lon said. "I instantly had the sense that this interview would be significant, so I requested [he] call me at his earliest convenience. We were talking within 10 minutes."

"[He] introduced himself and immediately started to tell me his account. He prefaced his story by saying that he had not known of the winged humanoid sightings reported throughout the Chicago metro area, until he stumbled upon an article two days [previously]. He was stunned by the revelations in the article, dozens of sightings that closely resembled his encounter in Cicero in 1981. But [his] narrative was different, because his encounter with the winged humanoid altered his overall beliefs and perspective of the world," he continued.

"[He] was a 13-year-old boy in 1981 who, through his own description, had suffered terrible abuse during his young life. On this particular evening, like many previous evenings, he sought solitude in his backyard. For whatever reason, he was able to employ a self-taught form of meditation that helped him cope with the abuse by his parents. As he sat on the grass, he entered into a deep level of spiritual awareness that had become more heightened than he had ever remembered. He soon became aware of an

unknown presence. As he exited his meditative state, he immediately noticed a pair of intense red eyes staring back at him from across the alleyway," explained Lon.

"The being was standing against the neighbor's white garage, about 75 feet from where [he] was sitting," he said. "It was a thin black human shape that stood seven feet in height, when compared to the four-foot high chain-linked fence at the end of his yard. There were wings folded on its back that extended above its long thin head. But those intense red eyes captured [his] concentration, to the point where he was literally paralyzed and frozen in place. The being was soon communicating with [him], in a telepathic form, more intent in garnering his attention than actually expressing information. The five-to-seven-minute experience was suffused with an assortment of emotions that ranged from tranquility to terror. [He] recognized that he was not dreaming or in a reflective state; this was actually occurring. That was the moment where his perspective of the world around him changed forever."

"He never forgot the encounter, and it influenced his life; though he was reluctant to disclose the incident until he started college and became part of an environment that would pay attention to what he had to say and not judge his experience. But [he] still did not understand why he was the recipient of the winged humanoid's scrutiny. Then one evening, while he and his wife were watching a video, [he] began to appreciate and grasp what had happened to him in 1981," said Lon.

Lon continued to relate the witness' experience; one that would ultimately prove very insightful.

"*The Mothman Prophecies* is a theatrical film that was released in 2002," he explained. "It is based on John Keel's book by the same title, even though the movie never really captured the full intensity of the book or the actual events that occurred in Point Pleasant, West Virgina in 1966 and 1967. Nonetheless, the film gave an overall impression of the story and some of the narrative that Keel expressed in the book. [The witness] told me that he was sitting at home watching the video, when the car accident scene unfolded. The winged being suddenly came into focus and [he] instantly went into sheer panic and uncontrollably burst into tears. His wife tried to comfort him, but he was beyond consolation. They continued to watch the video, but it was a terribly difficult experience for [him]. Later that evening, he disclosed his boyhood encounter in detail with his wife. Since that time, he has not talked

to anyone about the incident; until we talked today."

"I would first like to state that my interview with [him] was one of the most insightful I've experienced during my time as an investigator," Lon said of the experience. "We connected on a rare level, to the point where I could literally predict what he was going to say to me in each sentence. His experience confirmed to me that this phenomenon is not that of an indigenous being, but instead a flesh and blood extradimensional and/or extraterrestrial entity that is either attracted to certain persons or summoned by specific forces. [He] had no previous inclination of my theories, but rather defined what I have begun to believe during the course of the investigation."

"He also brought up, and totally discounted, the general speculation by many that this was a harbinger of future events," Lon added. "I asked [him] if he thought that, while he was in a state of meditation, the being could have possibly been a self-manifesting thought-form. He believes, that in his case, the being sought him out because of the abuse he had suffered through his parents. As he began to read the recent sighting descriptions in the Chicago metro area, he formulated that there may indeed be more than one winged being and that many of the witnesses came upon it by happenstance. But he also feels that some of the encounters occurred because the being sought out the witness for a specific reason. [He] didn't sense that the winged humanoid was evil, but believes that it is an ancient being that has sought out others in the past, and that it is the venerable entity that people since have referred to as a 'demon.'"

The second report came to me via Jesse James Durdel of the National Cryptid Society, and spans a decades-long series of encounters that began in rural Indiana in 1987.

Per the initial report:

> *I was out walking late at night a couple miles out of town, near some corn fields, when I had an unsettling feeling, a feeling of being watched. I turned my head to peer into one of the fields of corn, and I heard a rustle. Quickly, I hurried my pace and tried to make it back to my house. But while I was hurriedly jogging back, something flew in front of me, and it had glowing red eyes. It made a horrible screeching noise, and I practically was sprinting at that point. I've lived around these parts for decades, and I've never seen something like that. Sometimes, even now, late at night when I'm walking around*

that same area, I'll see something in the dark with those same glowing red eyes and I'll book it.

In a follow-up interview with Jesse, the witness described the creature as five to six feet tall and "human-like" with a wingspan of eight to nine feet. Admittedly, it was dark, and the witness did not have a flashlight, so details beyond the being's general shape are scarce, save one—its glowing red eyes. That the creature's eyes would glow red in the absence of direct light indicated that there could be something paranormal about it; normally, the appearance of glowing eyes, or "eyeshine," are caused in nocturnal animals by light reflecting from the inner surface of the eye and out through the pupil, but this requires a direct light source—it's what causes a deer's eyes to glow in headlights, for instance.

"Given the glowing eyes, the body/wing ratio reduces the likelihood that this animal could fly by natural or known means, and the fact you have witnessed the glowing eyes on different occasions over three decades in the same area suggests to me that you may be encountering something of a paranormal or supernatural nature," Jesse told the witness.

It was at this point that he made the decision to forward the case to me.

I was able to contact the witness over the course of July and August, and asked for further experiential details regarding his initial encounter: specifically, what he felt.

"I felt confusion, then fear when I saw the red eyes," the witness said. "I had never seen anything like it and was not sure what it was at first, but I then was sure that it was not something I was familiar with."

The man said that he's seen the creature "easily over a dozen times" since his first encounter in 1987, often around fall, but not exclusively so—and his last encounter was only a few months ago.

"Last time this happened, I decided it was time to give my old bones a stretch a few months ago, so I went on a walk around dusk," he said. "As it got darker, I had the feeling I was being watched and was beginning to feel a bit spooked. When I went to head back, I saw out of the corner of my eye the bright red eyes for a second before they flashed away. After that I walked back as fast as I could."

And each time, he believes, it is the same creature that he encounters. "I believe I am seeing the same creature, because there is something so

distinct about the glowing of the eyes, and the uneasiness it causes me to feel," said the witness.

Ultimately, the man didn’t know what to make of his encounters, save that they were very unusual.

"I don't know why I always see it. It never seems to want to harm me, as it has had many chances to do so, but I still feel frightened by it," said the witness.

"I don't know if I know exactly what it is, but I do not think it is necessarily evil, although I am uneasy by it," he continued. "I also do not know why I have seen it so many times, or what it wants from me, but I think it is something old. I am not sure what to make of all of this, but I am glad that I have had these experiences, because I feel not many have."

Two disparate witnesses, both describing an ancient entity attracted to their fear. These reports are an example of the many synchronicities that emerged during this investigation. If you’re not familiar with the word, a synchronicity is the simultaneous occurrence of events which appear to be related but have no apparent causal connection. The idea came from famous 20th century psychiatrist Carl Jung, who defined synchronicity as “meaningful coincidence”. Jung entertained the notion that the structure of reality included a principle of acausal connection, and recognizing synchronicities is a way for us to attempt to map the metaphysical.

The three reports that close out the 20th century in our timeline are another fine example of the phenomenon; a small series of synchronicities—three reports that all feature the word “gargoyle.”

The first report took place in Rock Island, Illinois in 1997.

> *I am now 32 and this story is coming out of Rock Island, Illinois, about three hours away from Chicago. In about the year 1997 I remember my mom having to work third shift. She asked me to run out to the car and get something for her before she went to work. This was about 9 or 10 p.m. and all of a sudden, I heard something make a big whoosh that sounded like ginormous wings right above my head.*
>
> *So, I looked up (we lived right in front of the Chippiannock Cemetery...that never ever scared me mind you, even at night) and I looked up at the street light across the street from our house (but that night the light wasn't on, it went out). I remember looking up and all*

of a sudden, I seen a figure with red eyes looking back at me and it was just sitting there and I could tell it had huge wings down at its side.

*I ran back in the house and told my mom that I just seen this thing out there and told her what it was. I don't know if she believed me or not but she was like, "that ain't nothing but the devil after yo a**"*[AC2]*. I was scared. After that I went to my room and lay down and all of the sudden, I heard the whooshing sound by my window. I can't remember if I had seen anything or not. I just heard the sound again and I was just terrified. So, I just closed my blinds, turned my TV on and fell asleep.*

Whatever I seen that night I don't know if they call it a devil or what, but it was real. I remember it probably being about five feet tall in the wings had to be pretty large because I remember when it was looking at me from on top of the light pole, its wings were kind of like hanging down as if it was wrapped up and they look pretty big. From that day on I believe all the sightings that I've been hearing about were true. I've been hearing about it for years.

Lon was able to speak to the witness of this first report over the telephone.

"I called the witness and she described the incident in detail," he said. "She stated that it reminded her of a gargoyle and that the eyes were quite bright and that there were small protrusions or horns on the head. It seemed that the incident still bothers her to this day...very believable."

The second report was from the Naperville area only 25 miles west of Chicago, and took place roughly 20 years ago.

I was a senior in high school, taking a late-night ride with my boyfriend near his house in Naperville/Lisle, Illinois. We were sneaking out to have a cigarette. As we were driving along a street, slowly with both windows completely down—he had a Mustang and didn't want to wake the neighborhood with his loud exhaust—we heard a loud screech in the distance.

We looked at each other and confirmed that we both had heard the same thing. He slowed down to a complete stop to listen. All of the sudden, coming from the left side of the driver's side of the

front windshield appeared this gargoyle-like thing. It was about four feet in length, with wings, front claws, reptilian-like skin and big glowing eyes. The color is hard to remember, it was almost transparent like...purple.

As it flew in front of the windshield, literally over the car's hood, it stopped suddenly and proceeded to scare the shit out of us both. Its eye protruded from its head and it made a snarling like gesture. It definitely was trying to scare us. It then flew off or disappeared.

This happened so quickly. The adrenaline in our veins pumped instantly from the fright. Immediately after the thing flew off, I looked to the left at my boyfriend and every hair on both of his arms was standing straight up. Again, we both confirmed what we both had seen and were bewildered.

20 years later, I still wonder what we had seen. I've researched on my own on the net. I have found that what I had witnessed has been possibly been seen and may be still out there.

This sighting makes me a believer that there is another dimension that we cannot see. It sometimes may show its face. This thing, this entity was not nice. It was demonic, it used its power over us to scare us beyond anything that I've ever felt before.

I drive by the location all the time. I live near it. The location is near a wooded area/a subdivision and, get this, an Abbey and Monastery. The land that we were traveling on and also the wooded area (perhaps it lived in) was once land owned by the Abbey. Is there a connection? I'd love to know!

Lon was never able to follow up with this witness, at least to my knowledge, so take that for what it's worth; but I wanted to include it for the synchronicity.

The third report is a different story. Lon and I both spoke to this witness, a woman in Rockford, Illinois who said that in 1999, along with her husband and a girlfriend, she witnessed a flying, red-eyed "gargoyle."

Rockford is about 75 miles northwest of Chicago's downtown and 60 miles west of Lake Michigan.

"The incident occurred during the summer, in the early evening when there was a full moon. The trio was relaxing on the friend's front porch,

which was located on Willard Ave. W, near Auburn High School and Cottonwood Airport in Rockford, Illinois," said Lon of the group's experience.

"During a conversation, the friend stopped talking and began to stare across the street," he continued. “[The witness] looked in the same direction, and noticed a dark gray winged humanoid slowly flying near a large tree. [She] stated that it seemed like the being 'was in slow motion' as it glided toward the tree. The friend said, 'do you see that?' The witnesses were close enough to notice that it had small cat-like ears and intense red eyes. There were no other facial features visible. It was quite muscular throughout the body and had two defined legs, and had arms that attached to the wings."

"She stated that the winged humanoid was seven feet in length with a wide wing span. The wings were like those of a bat with a leather-like membrane," he explained. "Apparently the being perched in the tree, but again took flight. This is when [the witness's] husband took notice. The winged being was gliding towards a pair of large pine trees, as its legs were 'kicking up and down' while in flight."

"The being flew between the 2 pine trees, and then suddenly 'vanished.' [The witness] said 'gargoyle,' and her friend acknowledged 'yes, a gargoyle,’" he said.

"After the incident, [the witness] stated that they seemed to have forgotten the encounter until a year later when she asked her friend if she remembered the sighting. Her friend said she had, but had also forgotten the incident," added Lon.

Similar to other sightings, the witness was led to make a report after seeing that others had already come forward with their experiences.

"[The witness's] son told her about the recent reports and suggested she call me," he said. "He was also aware of the winged humanoid sightings in the Chicago area."

I was able to contact the witness by phone, and she repeated the story told to Lon with no variation or embellishment.

The witness did add that a friend of hers had told her, after hearing her story, that she had once seen a “big bat” hanging upside down from a tree near Rockford’s Nelson Bridge.

Ultimately, the witness was unsure of exactly what she had seen in 1999.

“People ask me if it could have been a demon,” she said. “I don’t

know. I don’t know what I saw, but I’ll never forget it.”

Rockford would go on to host several other sightings in the 21st century.

CHAPTER FOUR
HE’S A 21ST CENTURY MOTHMAN

The sightings only increased after the turn of the century. They accelerated, slowly at first, picking up speed until reaching terminal velocity in the spring of 2017.

The 21st century sightings began in the summer of 2000 with two startled witnesses killing time near a dam in the dead of night.

“I came across your post on my Facebook timeline and it automatically brought back some rather scary, yet crazy memories of a run in with what everyone has been recently seeing in the Chicago area or something very similar,” began the report.

> *It was back in the late summer of 2000, around [August]. There's a park/dam in a town by the name of Goshen, Indiana that people frequently visit during the day. A friend of mine lived right near the dam and sometimes at night we would head over there and*

just hang out.

One clear night we decided to take a walk to the dam since there was a full moon out and it was a really bright out...so we figured why not. So, we walked to the dam which was about a five-minute walk. Once you get to the dam area there's a long path along the top of the lake that you have to walk to get to the end where the dam starts at. We were walking like normal, just talking and looking at the sky when we approached the end area of the dam. There are some steps that go down to the bottom of the dam that's usually used by people who like to fish.

Anyway...we hear this loud rumbling, like the rocks moving like crazy down below. We were like 'what the heck is that noise, what's going on down there?' All of the sudden we hear this whoosh. It was something similar to the whoosh you would hear from a pterodactyl in a Jurassic Park movie, that's the only way I can describe the sound. It flew right at the edge of the dam but it was too dark to clearly see it. What we did see was the outline before it swooped in the moonlight. I remember feeling the intense rush of air from its flap. I've seen A LOT of birds growing up in the country and traveling to all kinds of nature parks, and this was no ordinary bird. It had a scary similar resemblance to the creeper in mid-flight with its wings in the movie Jeepers Creepers.

But that wasn't the scary part.

Not more than three whooshes from its wings, we hear the brush behind us that leads to the woods move around. Then we hear this loud BANG! Someone was SHOOTING at it! We bolted out of there as fast as we could, sprinting back towards the parking lot at the end of the dam, when we heard this loud CRASH on the opposite side of the lake where we think the creature landed.

We got back to my friend's house and heard police sirens. We didn't go back out, but we went the next day to see what crashed on the opposite side. There were huge broke tree branches but nothing else. A man was outside walking around the area and he said he lives nearby and heard something that sounded like a plane crash in the trees. But there was no sign of anything but broken trees.

My friend and I talk about that thing every time we see each other. His uncle witnessed something like that in 2002 in the South

Bend area.

But the real question is...who was shooting at it? That's what bugged me the most all these years! We made jokes it was Van Helsing lol.

But yeah, when I hear stories like that it really makes you think of all the OTHER things that are there.

As far as I know, nobody was ever able to follow up on this report. That happened more often than I liked, to be honest. Personally, anything I received that I couldn't contact the witness about went straight into our Reports from the Void column—created specifically for those times when I couldn't investigate something to my satisfaction. But Lon preferred to publish everything he received that he couldn't prove was a hoax. He always tried to get more information from the witness, and he never lied or embellished the reports. It was just a difference in how we did things. I believe in being open and honest about that sort of thing, and if we weren't able to speak to somebody, I'm going to tell you about it.

I included this report for a couple of reasons. First and foremost because Lon published it to Phantoms & Monsters; that makes it part of the narrative, whether you think it should be or not. But secondly, because of something that came up in the 2010 Rockford sightings—a reference to the movie *Jeepers Creepers*. There are a couple of synchronicities in this report: that particular horror movie, for one, but also the comparison of this creature to a pterodactyl. Mothman wasn't the only thing flying around Lake Michigan, and as the investigation continued, we began to get more reports of creatures that sounded a hell of a lot like pterosaurs...or thunderbirds. We'll see those reports when the 21st century advances into its teen years. For now, we're still being bombarded by winged humanoids.

The next sighting to come out of the aughts was of a "man with wings" flying over a boat docking facility on the Kinnickinnic River in Milwaukee on June 21st, 2001.

Lon received this report from a man with whom he had participated in an online chat session.

"I was a part of a live online alien experiencers' chat session," Lon said. "I had mentioned Phantoms & Monsters and was discussing some of my work. One of the participants, who happened to live in Milwaukee, asked about winged humanoids and mentioned that he had a sighting in 2001. He

was unaware of the Chicago area and recent Wisconsin sightings. So, I asked the witness to call me after the session."

“[The witness] called me a few hours later. He stated that the sighting occurred on June 21, 2001 at a boat docking facility on the Kinnickinnic River, now called Horny Goat Marina. It is located at 1933 South 1st Street about one mile west of Milwaukee Bay on Lake Michigan,” he continued. “[He] and two friends were taking a sailboat out of dry dock. It was early afternoon. As he looked up at the mast, he noticed a winged flying object just east of his location. [The witness] is a military veteran, so this sighting was quite confusing. It was a clear sky, so he was able to see some detail. He also stated that it was hard to judge the altitude of this object. As he watched, he began to distinguish more detail, and soon realized that this was not a craft. It was apparent that this was a 'man with wings' and it was quite large. He estimates the huge bat-like wings were approximately 30 feet from tip to tip and were attached to the hips. The body, which was entirely medium brown, was about 10 feet in length with a head that had no neck, and seemed to be a part of the upper torso. The arms were attached to the wings. There were no legs, but instead there was a notched structure in the back. The winged being never flapped its wings, and simply glided.”

"The most interesting aspect to this winged being was that it twice 'disappeared,' then reappeared during the short time that [he] and his friends observed it," Lon noted. "[The witness] had a pair of binoculars handy and briefly watched the best he could, since the being flew about quickly. At the end, it vanished out of sight, which amazed the three eyewitnesses. [He] said that he had the sense that 'it knew that we were watching it.'"

That disappearing trick is an old favorite of Mothman. We’ll see it more than a few times before this is over.

In 2004 we’re back in Rockford for the sighting of an "all black… man with huge bat-like wings".

“I recently learned of the Chicago humanoid sightings and then about the black winged humanoid sighting near Rockford, Illinois. This was shocking to me because I live in Winnebago County in Loves Park, a city that borders Rockford and is 60 miles from Chicago, and I have seen a similar black winged being,” the witness wrote in a November 2018 email to Lon.

I was standing on the deck in my backyard late one summer evening, it was August of 2004, I was stargazing as I often do, when I

was startled by the sudden furious barking of a neighbor's dogs. As I turned and looked towards the direction of the barking, it was at that moment I saw an all-black seven foot in length man with huge bat-like wings flying across the park that borders along my backyard. It then descended to approximately five to six feet above ground. It pulled or folded its wings in slightly and then glided along the paved path that runs through the park. It continued gliding through an easement between two houses disappearing from my sight.

Stunned by what I had just seen I quickly ran in through the backdoor and out the front, stepped out onto the front porch and that is when I heard a loud screeching sound. The sound was so loud and it was coming from the thick tree line across the street from the park on yet another easement.

I quickly stepped back into the house, shut and locked the door and woke my sleeping husband. I asked him to come listen to what I was hearing, I told him what had happened and what I saw on our way towards the living room window as the tree line could be seen from there. The screeching continued sporadically for approximately five minutes. Then it went silent.

The afternoon of the following day, after the incident as I was walking to the mailbox, the elderly neighbor who resided in the house that the tree lined easement borders the backyard yelled across the street asking me if I had a minute to take a look at something strange in his backyard. What the neighbor showed me was his chain link fence posts were bent down at a 45-degree angle. It was only the ones closest to the tree line. He was perplexed as to what could have possibly caused this to happen.

I attempted to explain to him what it was I saw and heard the night before. Just as I went into detail that I saw something very large and strange flying, I got a raised eyebrow with the look of are you crazy, and was told that what I saw was a heron and that no bird could have bent those posts like that. So, I quickly dropped the subject, as I walked back home another neighbor two houses away yelled, 'hey, did you hear all that loud weird noise last night? It woke me up. I thought the rainforest or something moved in overnight.' To which I replied with 'yes I heard and I have not a clue as to what it was.'

I researched for a few months after my encounter and found out quite a bit about Mothman sightings. However, nothing out there matched what I saw that night. So, as time went by it had become all but a faded memory over the years until now.

This is another one where the report was received and that was the beginning and end of it. It's interesting to me that they mentioned they'd heard of the Chicago and Rockford sightings—I wouldn't expect that from somebody sending in a fake story. If it were me, I'd feign ignorance to make my report seem more believable. And the corroborative details point towards someone either relating their authentic experience, or who at the very least did their homework.

Also, in 2004 came an account from a parent who said their son had seen "the Mothman" near Panther Creek in Auburn, Illinois.

My son, who was about 12, told me a story one day after I picked him up from his afterschool friend's house. They lived right by a creek and the boys always walked down the road to the creek to play in it.

One afternoon in 2004, about 3:30- 4 o'clock, when the sun is still high in the sky but starting its descent so it was a little blinding in their eyes. They were walking down the road to the bridge over the creek when they noticed a man standing on the road. Now this is from the mouth of a 12-year-old. He said this man was just standing there, looked like he was all in black and he said it looked like the man didn't have a neck. They were a little puzzled but kept walking toward it. He said that is when it opened up its "arms" straight out and it appeared to have wings. At that time, he said it just flapped them one time, like his arms went down one time and he said it took off straight up in the air. They tried to see where it went but said the sun was in his eyes.

I didn't know what to think at the time but just dismissed it as young boys and their stories. When I started working nights...I started listening to Coast to Coast AM and realized he had possibly seen the "Mothman."

Then he told me, when he was in his early twenties, he was hanging out with some friends from a surrounding small town. They were telling stories and one of the guys started talking about seeing

this giant flying 'bird man'. This is the very same area where my son saw it. They were both excited to meet someone else that had seen what they had.

I know Lon corresponded with this parent a bit, and was "hoping to talk to the son when he is available." We can only hope that he comes forward someday, but I don't mind telling you that I'm not holding my breath. Witnesses just don't put themselves out there like they used to.

Two years later in 2006, the creeper returned—this time in Wisconsin.

Lon received a report from a witness who said she was riding with her husband and his two children on a desolate stretch of Highway 59 near Road X in southern Wisconsin, when they saw a "man with bat-like features" flying near their vehicle.

"First of all, I would like to thank you for your site. Here I don't feel ridiculed telling my story," she said of Lon's website, Phantoms & Monsters. "Even if I am, I don't care what the skeptics think. I know what I saw, and it is the truth."

In July, 2006, on the 15th or 16th, my husband and I were in the process of moving from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to a small area between Whitewater and Eagle WI. It was about 9:30 p.m., and there was a bright full moon in a clear sky.

We were travelling down Highway 59 east, past Eagle, turning onto Road X...a somewhat desolate stretch. A thin band of trees are on each side of the road, with open fields behind them. This area is about 18 miles approximately east of Whitewater, located between Eagle and North Prairie, WI.

My husband was driving, his two young children in the back seat, I believe asleep. Suddenly swooping over the trees on our left, lowering down in front of the car windshield, then upwards again over the treetops to our right, gliding at a slow ascent over the field, was what I would describe as man with bat-like features, flying like a bat.

This creature was as real as you and I are. We had a very close up look at it. It was long, six to seven feet in length. I say length, because it was flying sideways, looking into the car, much like doing

the side-stroke. It was a dark grey, very leathery skin, one wing kind of tucked into its side (the one facing the ground) and the other flapping while it flew. The wing was huge, and exactly like a bat's [wing]. What got me the most were the eyes. They were very round. Where the whites would be, looked rheumy, the best way to describe it. The irises were of a very pale blue. I was not afraid. I was astounded, amazed, and even excited. My husband was shook up, and would not stop when I asked him to. The kids were in the car.

I hope this will also bring more people forward who have seen this mystery creature, or other creatures as well. I was reading recently online of a woman in Minot, Wisconsin, who in about 1960, also had seen a creature of this description. I notice that some who have witnessed this, compare it to the creature from the movie, "Jeepers Creepers." There are definitely similarities. I had never seen the movie yet, prior to my sighting.

Lon noted that the sighting took place near a wilderness area known for unusual activity, and that the creature in question had features idiosyncratic to the majority of other flying humanoid sightings.

"This sighting was on the edge of the Kettle-Moraine Low Prairie State Natural Area," he said. "The pale blue eyes and the sideways flight using one wing, is quite interesting. Out of all the sightings I have received over the years, these characteristics are unique. Another example of how bizarre and mysterious these beings really are."

I did a little checking of my own, just standard procedure on my part, verifying geographic and weather data. Contrary to the witness's testimony, historical weather data showed that while the skies were clear on those days in 2006, the moon—which was waning gibbous—did not rise until 11:21 p.m. on the 15th and 11:43 p.m. on the 16th, roughly two hours after the sighting reportedly took place.

I asked Lon about it, and he thought that perhaps the witness, whom he knew personally, may have misremembered precisely when the sighting occurred, given how much time had passed. It's certainly possible. I don't have much trouble imagining how the important details of an encounter like that stick with you—the man with bat-like features and pale, rheumy blue eyes—while the incidentals like exact times and dates fade in your memory.

The following summer, in 2007, across Lake Michigan, a witness

reported seeing a flying humanoid with “glowing yellowish eyes” while on a boat at the Prairie Creek Reservoir.

> *I am originally from Muncie, Indiana and grew up spending a lot of time at Prairie Creek because my family has a boat there.*
>
> *It was summer 2007 when we had taken a boat ride and watched the sunset. It was dusk and the sun was setting as we approached our dock. As we got closer my friend and I both saw what looked like a human standing at the end of our dock, and thought it was strange because there was no one else around—our neighboring boats were all docked, there were no other cars around, etc. We were the only one out that evening from our dock area. It then turned around and we saw its glowing yellowish eyes. At this point, we were freaked out wondering what this was because there was something totally off about it and it was clearly not a normal human. Then, as we got even closer, it spread its wings, flapped a few times and soared up into the sky. It was WAY too big to be a bird...I've never seen anything like it before or after. It was probably around five to six feet tall, and really dark; the whole body and wings were gray/black.*
>
> *Not sure if this is of interest but my family and I also saw a UFO at Prairie Creek Reservoir around dusk as well a few years later. We were one of the only boats on the water, it was such a serene, quiet and peaceful evening. My mother looked up at the sky and saw the UFO so we all looked up, it was shaped like a tin can, stayed still and made absolutely no noise. At that instant, my father caught a fish and the commotion caused us all to look down and a few seconds later when we looked back up it was gone without a trace.*

UFO sightings and flying humanoids have quite a history together. There’s no proven causal link, at least not yet, but the correlative fact that they’re so often reported in the same place is worth considering.

It’s also worth noting that this witness is “a known, credible media professional,” according to Lon.

I verified their identity myself, and they are who they say they are—it's why I’m not even relating gender information. People deserve their

privacy, and I'll be damned if somebody is having their career tarnished on my watch. The stigma surrounding these reports is still very real. It's one thing to be the investigator, but something else entirely to be the person claiming to have seen a winged monster. People are more forgiving of what I do, I'm not defying anyone's expectations; I'm supposed to be weird.

CHAPTER FIVE
DEERBAT AND THE FLYING TAR MAN

2010 started with another gargoyle. That spring, a man in Joliet, Illinois said he saw a winged creature perched on his neighbor's roof.

According to an email received by Lon:

> *It was about 2:00 a.m. [at the] end of March [or] beginning of April [in far west Joliet]. I was watching TV with the window open slightly. I kept hearing a muffled cry almost like a woman crying in the distance. I finally decided to take a look and see what it was. I was looking all over the backyard and neighboring yards but didn't see anything. When I was about to give up, I heard it again. I noticed that it was coming from above me. I looked up and noticed something about four feet tall sitting on the peak of the house behind me. I grabbed my phone to take a picture, but when I was about to take the picture it turned its head to look at me. It scared the crap out of me. Then it dropped like it fell. Right before it hit the ground its wings came out and it swooped away. I couldn't believe how big the wingspan was.*

Lon was able to speak to this witness over the phone.

"I talked to [the witness] by telephone," Lon said. "He believes it was the early spring of 2010 near County Road and Black Road in west Joliet, Illinois. [He] states he heard what sounded like a woman crying at around 2 a.m. local time. After a while he looked out the back window and noticed a four-and-a-half-foot dark-colored entity perched on the peak of his neighbor's

roof. The being was crouched down and reminded [him] of a gargoyle. He grabbed his phone to take a photo but was instantly halted when the being looked in his direction. [The witness] said he didn't see the eyes, but 'knew' it was looking at him and that he was terribly frightened. In fact, he dropped his phone in shock."

"The winged being stood and leaped from the roof, then dove towards the ground," he continued. "As it descended, the huge ten-to-twelve-foot wings unfurled as it swooped upwards and quickly ascended into the night sky. [The witness] never saw the wings flap as the being ascended. He did notice that it had pointed ears, but could not make out any further features on the face. The wings were attached from the shoulders to the legs and did not seem to have detached arms."

I tried to call the witness myself, but had to leave a voicemail. The witness never called me back. That's par for the course with being a paranormal investigator; sometimes people are just done, they told their story and that's all the involvement they wanted. So, I make a note of it and move on, there's always plenty more to keep me busy.

Surprisingly, a plaintively crying gargoyle was not as strange as 2010 was going to get.

Two suspiciously similar reports came out of the Rockford, Illinois area that year, and if Lon and I hadn't spoken to the witnesses personally, I'd have said I was sure they were from the same person.

I was online when I first saw Dalton's account. After the investigation started, I was always looking out for any leads—and this story seemed like a good one. He agreed to be interviewed when I reached out to him, and even allowed me to use his first name.

The following took place in the late summer of 2010.

> *If I had not experienced it first hand, I would have probably dismissed it as fiction. Please, I assure you this is 100 percent the whole story of that particular night.*
>
> *So, it began as a typical summer day approximately five years ago. These events take place in northern Illinois near Rockford. My friend, Nick, and I were cruising around in my 1997 Firebird. As the day progressed, we decided to head towards the country roads to do some drifting. Typical behavior from a 16-year-old with a sports car. This was something that we did quite often also.*

Jump ahead 2 hours or so, and it's around 11 p.m. and we are on a gravel road. We're in a location that was secluded but was farm land everywhere, so there were houses every so often. Now me and Nick are talking while I'm repeatedly slowing down and then applying the gas hard so I could get my vehicle sideways on this straight patch of road.

The corn on the sides of this old gravel road were head height as it was towards the end of their growing season. Anyways I began slowing down for probably the fifth time, only I could see the corn shaking. Me and Nick both had stopped talking and were both watching the corn. I had expected a group of deer to run out and cross the road so naturally I slowed down to a slow roll. The corn was now shaking fiercely and quickly headed toward the road.

Now at this point me and Nick are staring at the corn waiting for the expected wildlife to pass. Now, I'm not sure how to describe this but what we saw was frightening. The corn parted about eight feet in front of my car, I don't know if you have ever seen a deer jump out of corn but it's like a horse hop. This thing was the size of big buck but was completely black. Mind you my headlights are focused right at the stretch of road and corn area, so the whole scene was well illuminated. As it proceeded to jump out of the corn it opened these huge set of wings and remained airborne. It flew right in front of my car and did this zigzag flight pattern incredible fast. Almost like a fly or bug would do. After the quick zigzags it shot straight up in to the air. I mean shot like it was placed in a canon and blasted in the sky.

My Firebird was a model that had T-tops, so me and Nick both jerked our heads up but due to my lights pointing forward obviously, and it being dark out, we couldn't see where the creature went. I shit bricks and floored my car, while Nick's screaming, "GO GO GO GO GO GO!" I drive as fast as I can while still maintaining control in the gravel. We drive for a good 15 minutes completely quiet. The whole time we were watching around us, I don't know why but we instantly assumed that the thing was chasing us. Now mind you that from the moment when we started to see the corn move to when the thing left our view was only a matter of maybe 30 seconds.

We finally start to calm down and are on a road that was

frequented more. We can see farmers in the fields on tractors. Being that I can see other people I feel safe. So, I decide to pull over on the side of the road and immediately say "What the fuck was that!?" But we had no answers. The only thing we came up with was that it was the size of a deer but flew like a bat. We named it accordingly, The Deerbat. We say it was the size of a deer but it was actually humanoid shape. It just ran out of the corn like a deer. The Deerbat was incredibly black like it was covered in tar.

After we stop talking, we notice in the field a couple yards by us is a "harvest in progress" sign. So again, being dumb teenagers, we decide to steal the sign. I run and grab it and shove it in the back seat and throw hoodies over it. It was a large sign and had the metal pole still attached to it. It didn't hide in the back of a Firebird very well. But we managed and we headed out of the country and made it to a neighboring town, New Milford. We both were thirsty and wanted a snack so I pull into a gas station and back my car into a space that faces the main road. As soon as I shut my car off this old beat up rusted Chevy pulls in front of me as if he's blocking us in. His windows are tinted dark, we couldn't tell who was in it or what was going on. He remained there for several minutes. Just sitting. We didn't get out the car because this night was already a big nope, and the last thing I wanted was a hillbilly fuck trying to start something. As mysteriously as he pulled up, without warning he drove off.

We assumed that it was somebody who seen us take the sign and that he was getting my plates. Maybe he was waiting for us to get out of the car to confront us. The only problem was that he entered from our left and exited on the right. He was never behind my car to get my plates, and I didn't have a plate on the front of my car. Anyways though he left so we went and got our drinks and chips and drove to my house to sleep.

I have no idea if the truck was related to any of the other events of that night or not but it was creepy nonetheless. To me the only way I can describe the Deerbat is to compare it to the creature in the movies Jeepers Creepers. That's exactly what we saw. Obviously though that's just a movie. I'm not religious, but this is how I picture a demon.

Jump ahead a month or so and I'm watching the pretty idiotic

show called Monster Quest, and they were focusing on a [creature] called Mothman. Instantly I shit bricks all over again. This thing fits what we saw except one detail. Witnesses describe glowing red eyes that pierce looks through you. We didn't see that. The Deerbat was completely black, it was absent of light.

We never seen the Deerbat again and to this day we tell people about what we saw. They always ask the same question, 'Bro what drugs were you on??' To be clear I don't do drugs.

According to Dalton, the entire sighting lasted between 15 to 20 seconds, and neither he nor his friend were able to discern any fine details about the creature's appearance.

"The thing arc jumped out of the cornfield but never landed," he said. "It zigzagged back and forth, like a bat. There were no glowing red eyes. It was just totally black...it was a big thing with big wings."

“It all happened so fast, we couldn't get details,” he added.
He was able to recall that the winged being definitely had four appendages in addition to its wings, although he's not certain if there were two arms and two legs, or if all four appendages were legs.

Dalton noted, too, that the fear he and his friend felt seemed like a "natural reaction to the situation," rather than any supernatural effect created by the creature. By then I made sure to ask witnesses how they felt during the encounter. I never mentioned the word fear, but one way or another, that’s what they always described.

Sometime after I had found the Deerbat, Lon received the Flying Tar Man by delivery. The report was sent to him by a witness who agreed to go by his first name, Curt.

This took place in northern Illinois, not far from Rockford. My friend and I were just riding around in my car. As the day continued, we decided to head out towards the country backroads. We were both 17 and this was the summer before our senior year in high school.

We had been riding around for several hours at night, and around 10 p.m. we are on a gravel road I wasn't familiar with. It was a location that had lots of farmland all around and a few houses here and there. We were talking while I'm speeding along this gravel road.

There was no drinking or drugs involved. The corn on both sides of the road was high.

I looked ahead and noticed that the road was about to dip, so I slow back. As I approached the dip, I could see the corn shaking to the right of me as the headlight hit it. We both stopped talking as we watched the corn. I thought it was probably deer about to sprint out onto the road, so I slowed down to a crawl. The corn was now shaking violently. We're staring at the corn waiting for the deer to jump out.

Then all of a sudden, the corn literally parts open just to the right of us. This 'thing' steps out. It was the size of a large man and all black. As it walked out of the corn it was well illuminated by my headlights. It leaped and opened these huge set of wings, and instantly went airborne. It quickly flew right in front of my car and swooped up into the air as it reached the other side of the road. I swear, the first thing that came to my mind was the 'Jeepers Creepers' monster! I didn't see any facial features, but the wings were very wide and looked like that of a giant bat!

I floored the gas pedal. My friend was yelling to get out of there! I drove as fast as I could, trying to maintain control on the gravel surface. We drove for a good five minutes before saying a word. The whole time we're looking around us, hoping that thing wasn't chasing us. We began to calm down and soon ended up on a road I knew.

As I thought about it, that thing looked like it was covered in shiny black tar. It had a weird sheen to it. The fact that it accelerated into flight so quickly had me stumped. My friend and I talked about it through our entire senior year and never did have a clue as to what we saw. We referred to it as the 'Flying Tar Man.' We didn't dare tell anyone else at school. I recently told my wife about it, but she's a skeptic and doesn't believe in the supernatural.

Anyway, after I heard about the sightings around Chicago, I figured I'd track you down and write about it. I live in Texas currently. Thanks for reading. Curt.

Lon was also able to contact Curt and speak to him over the telephone.

"I called Curt...to discuss the incident," Lon said. "This occurred in Winnebago County, north of Rockford, Illinois on a gravel farm road off of Route 70. He said he believes it was somewhere near Wempletown."

Wempletown is roughly 10 miles northwest of the ‘Deerbat’ sighting.

"The description is similar to the winged humanoids reported to us in 2017," he continued. "[Curt] told me that the height was about six feet, and that the body was very thin. He estimated that the wing span was about 15 feet. He also said that it definitely had arms and legs. The 'Jeepers Creepers' reference was also used by several witnesses from the Chicago area as well."

The same *Jeepers Creepers* reference cropped up in Dalton’s sighting report.

I admit to being suspicious of the whole affair when the ‘Flying Tar Man’ report came out. Dalton had described the being he encountered as looking like it was “covered in tar” and, beyond that, he’d specifically mentioned that neither alcohol or drugs were involved in his sighting. Then there were the very obvious similarities in the sightings themselves; the nearly identical location, during the same summer, with both sets of witnesses who were teenage boys out driving around in the country. Like I said, it was suspicious.

But when I talked to Dalton after the second sighting was reported, he seemed as puzzled by it as I was.

He didn’t know any Curt from that area, but he did notice all of the similarities in the stories.

“He’s even the same age as me,” Dalton said. “The similarities are almost hard to believe, but stranger things have happened, I suppose.”

As I looked closer at the respective narratives, I began to reconcile their similarities. If the creature was as black as tar, then it makes sense to describe it as such, and if it was haunting the fields and backroads of Rockford in the summer of 2010 then that’s when I’d expect people to see it. Jeepers Creepers is a popular movie, and multiple other witnesses—who certainly don’t know each other—have used the creature from it to help make sense of their sightings. It’s also not unusual for people who are constantly mocked for having a paranormal experience to try and reassure their audience that they were sober when it happened. Furthermore, I was a teenage boy once, from a community no larger than the one in which these encounters took place—I can tell you firsthand how popular of an activity driving around in the country is.

Lon and I verified that the phone numbers used by both Dalton and Curt matched where they said they were calling from, and everything else checked out.

These sightings weren't the end of Rockford's participation in this mystery. Another witness came forward later to describe how, in the late summer of 2017, she'd seen a "human-like" winged being in Rockford.

Lon took the report.

"The eyewitness stated it was approximately 6 a.m. and that she was on the outside porch," Lon said. "All of a sudden she observed a human-like being walking in the yard of a house on the corner of Bruce Street and Woodlawn Avenue in Rockford, Illinois, about one block away. The being suddenly produced a large set of wings and took flight, gliding over the back gate of the property. It then disappeared into the trees and foliage on the next block."

"There was enough morning light available for an excellent observation," he added.

"She had trouble comprehending what she had seen, and immediately went back inside the house to tell her boyfriend and his mother what she had seen," Lon continued. "She described the being as tall and dark, almost black. The wingspan was very broad."

The witness, like many others, was apprehensive about coming forward, but was less reluctant after hearing about Curt, Dalton, and the other sightings in and near Rockford.

"[The witness] was apprehensive on coming forward, until she was told about the other reports in the Rockford area by a family member," Strickler said. "She had no knowledge of the Chicago sightings."

As the pieces fell in place, those similarities felt increasingly less suspicious and more confirmative: just more synchronicities lining up, a metaphysical roadmap directing us towards the impossible.

Oak Ridge Forest Preserve *(Emily Wayland / The Singular Fortean Society)*

CHAPTER SIX
EXPLAINING THE UNINVESTIGATED

There's a quote that has stayed with me for years from the book *Hunt for the Skinwalker*; in it, Dr. Stephen Rorke remarks that "The role of science is to investigate the unexplained, not explain the uninvestigated."

It's good to be skeptical. You should question things and seek answers. But one thing you're going to see over and over again in the so-called skeptical dismissals of these reports is a declaration of resolution based on nothing more than the supposed skeptic's opinion. It's nice to have opinions, but declaring them to be fact without proof is disingenuous at best—and fraudulent at worst.

2011 is the first year in our timeline that this sort of deceptive practice becomes apparent. It gets much worse in 2017.

A trio of sighting reports were sent to UFO Clearinghouse throughout 2011; amazingly, one of them even included a photograph of a weird, winged creature. We'll start with that one.

The photograph was accompanied by the following account:

> *I'm from the southwest suburbs of Chicago. My wife and me travel into Chicago to take care of some business. On the way back we took a cruise through my old neighborhood just to check it out and to see what has changed.*
>
> *We were going down 63rd Street going west and were coming up to Pulaski Road.*
>
> *I then remembered about a giant Indian that is on the roof of this tobacco store (that's what it was when I was a kid, it's something else now) on the northwest corner of 63rd and Pulaski Road in Chicago. One time, when I was a kid, I was on the CTA bus going east on 63rd Street when the bus came to a stop at Pulaski. I was looking out the window and noticed three teenage girls standing on the sidewalk right next to the bus. Two of the girls were pointing up at this Indian trying to show the third girl something and they [were] all giggling. I was wondering what they [were] pointing and laughing*

at.

Some time went by and then one day I went to the currency exchange right over there. On the way out I decided to walk over by the Indian to the same spot where I [had] seen these girls laughing and pointing to see what it was they thought was funny. Well it turns out that if you look at the Indian from this exact spot his left thumb is sticking out and it looks like his thing is sticking out of his pants. When my wife and me were going by this Indian on August 22nd, 2011 at about 2:00 p.m. I decided to get a picture of this.

I just got [a] new smartphone and I wanted to check out how good the camera would work. So, I got out of the car and went to the spot and took about four pictures of this Indian. So, we left and went home and later on that night I went to look at the pictures I took. When I was checking these photos out, in one of the pictures I notice the object that was on the backside of Indian. At first, I didn't think nothing of it, I figured it was plane or something. But just for the heck of it I enlarged it. It looked something similar to a bird or a bat, but then again it doesn't. I have no idea what it could be. I was reluctant to send it in because I figured there was some explanation for what it is. But then I thought it still qualifies as [a] UFO, because I never seen anything like it before and don't know what it could be.

There is a kite, manufactured by Gayla, known as their 'Fox Bat' model; some people will tell you with 100% certainty that this witness photographed such a kite. They don't know it to be true, but that won't stop them from telling you. It's relatively easy to find videos and photographs of these kites online, and I can see why someone would be willing to entertain the possibility—what I don't understand is their certainty. The object in the witness' photograph doesn't really match the silhouette of the kite in question; it's missing the serrated wing edges, it has something that looks like a head, and it's opaque towards its center and translucent in its wings—something that, to me, indicates an object of more substance than a kite. The object in question resembles an actual flying fox bat more than it does a flimsy construct of thin plastic sheeting.

Not to mention the fact that I can't figure out where anybody over there would even be flying a kite. Where were they standing? The street? From the object's position relative to the statue you can see it would be

roughly northeast of it, on the other side of South Pulaski Road. It's large enough in the frame to indicate that, assuming it's roughly kite-sized, it's not very far away; so, where was this phantom kite flyer? This is a fairly dense urban area, with no park where this person must have been standing to fly their kite. And don't forget that this was only one of four pictures taken in rapid succession, yet none of the other photos show the object. Not only is our phantom kite flyer brave enough to stand in the middle of a Chicago street, but they're also fast enough to insert their kite in only one of a string of photographs—they must have been sprinting to avoid being hit by a car!

Now here's the difference between me and the debunkers: I won't try to tell you with any certainty that I know exactly what this object is when I can't prove it. I'm happy to speculate given what evidence we have, but that's a far cry from telling you I know the truth of it. I don't think the evidence shows that this object was a kite, but if somebody could prove it, I'd congratulate them and add it to the record. But they can't—and even worse, they haven't even tried. They've simply solved the case by proclamation, which, in the paranormal industry, is a fancy way of saying they just made something up. I can't tell you what this person photographed, but I can tell you that I don't think it was a kite—anything else would be dishonest.

One mundane explanation that did give me pause came from Emily: my wife, partner, and the Singular Fortean Society's resident photo and video analyst.

"I think this photo has a good chance of being a butterfly," she said. "Notice the wing shape and coloration compared to a comma or question mark butterfly. It could be forced perspective—making a relatively close object appear far away—that has caused a butterfly to be mistaken for the Mothman."

The fact that the photographer didn't see the object when he took the picture makes sense since a butterfly fluttering past would be unlikely to arouse suspicion, and its relative blurriness was in all likelihood due to the camera focusing on the statue, she added.

I'd buy that. We can't know for sure, but it makes more sense than some phantom kite flyer standing in the middle of a busy Chicago street. The daytime sightings are more likely to be some sort of misidentification, anyway. Their profiles don't match the potentially paranormal cases—they're missing the fear and high strangeness so prevalent in those reports.

The other two sightings were simply email reports sent in without

much, if any, follow-up on Manuel's part, at least as far as I know. That's not necessarily his fault, we've established how often reports are sent in and the witness is never heard from again.

The following reports fit the narrative of the larger phenomenon, but otherwise I don't know much about them.

Here is the first.

These are the events as they happened on Friday, September 30th, 2011 in the area around Miller Park in the University Park neighborhood in Chicago, Illinois. Approximately one block from the main campus of the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Things began like any normal Friday night; I and a couple of friends were going to go out to have a few drinks at a local bar. As I got to my apartment, I jumped into the shower to start getting ready while my roommate went to her room to get ready. I finished and walked out of the bathroom to my room and started to get ready to head out for the night.

As I started to get dressed, I heard my roommate scream loudly, I dropped what I was doing and ran to her room to see if she was alright. I walked in to see her cowering in the corner of her room, white as a ghost and shaking. She was babbling hysterically, saying that something was looking in at her from the window. I looked toward the window and didn't see anything but the light coming from the other apartments across the court yard. I asked what she had seen and tried to tell her that she might have been mistaken, we live on the third floor of a five-story apartment building and there is nothing outside the window but a 30 foot drop straight down to the courtyard below.

My roommate was hysterical and scared out of her wits; I took her to the living room and sat her on the couch. I then went to my room to put on a robe or a nightshirt on since I was only in my underwear. My roommate didn't want to be left alone and actually followed me to my room and waited there as I put on a robe and joined her in the living room. After about 20 minutes of calming her down, she finally told me what she had seen in her window.

She stated that she was getting dressed and when she turned to face the mirror on her dresser, she saw a pair of orange eyes

staring at her from the window. She turned around to see two brightly lit orange eyes staring out at her; these eyes were attached to a creature that was staring back at her through the window. My friend lost it and started screaming hysterically and backed herself into the corner. She said she was filled with this overwhelming feeling of complete and total terror, she felt like the creature was looking at her as though she was prey. She said she felt like a rabbit that was about to be pounced upon by an eagle.

I tried to rationalize with her what she had seen, telling her it could have been an optical illusion, or maybe it was the jitters from a week of hard studying. She dismissed everything, saying that she had seen what she had seen. As I sat there comforting her, my cell phone rang from my room. I got up and ran to my room and snatched it from my dresser top and answered it. It was my boyfriend and one of his buddies and they were talking a mile a minute, it sounded like they were out of breath, as I tried to get him to slow down, I walked past my roommates open door and to my absolute horror, I saw…a pair of glowing red eyes, looking through the window right at me!!

They stared at me for about three to four seconds before whatever it was abruptly left. Like my friend, I totally lost it and screamed at the top of my lungs and sprinted to the living room. My boyfriend was now screaming into the phone "What's wrong, what's wrong!"

Within two minutes, he and his best friend were pounding on the door to our apartment, followed shortly thereafter by one of our neighbors who had heard us screaming. Once we assured the neighbors that we were fine and that they did not have to call the [Chicago Police Department] for us, we shut the door and I immediately lost it when my boyfriend held me.

We told him what my roommate had seen in the window and that whatever it was had come back again, that's when I had seen it. He then began to tell us that he and his buddy were on their way to our apartment to pick us up when they had seen what they describe as a large bat with large glowing eyes. It was perched on top of a basketball hoop in the neighborhood park. They stated that it saw them and had alighted into the air with an audible whoosh.

He states that there were about 6 people in the park and all

of them had seen it when it had taken off. He states that there was no way anyone could have missed it, it was about six to seven feet tall, dark grey to black and those eyes glowed with the intensity of two glowing embers.

He says that they saw it easily when it took off and headed away from the park due to both the lights of the city as well as the nearly full moon that night. They lost sight of the creature after about five seconds, that's when he picked up the phone and called me. He says that when they heard me start screaming, they sprinted the block and a half to the apartment.

Needless to say, none of us went out that night and my boyfriend and his buddy stayed with us through the weekend. My roommate refused to go back to her room till it was well after daylight, she closed and locked the window and drew the blinds shut. She says that it's the only way that she felt secure to be in there after dark.

I'm still wary about coming home or going out after dark; even though I know I have to do it for both school and work. I hope that whatever it was, was sufficiently scared off by two insanely screaming college students and I hope that I NEVER see it again. I don't think that neither I nor my roommate will ever be the same again after this.

There is one interesting fact; my boyfriend told me when I saw him on Tuesday that a few students around the [University of Illinois – Chicago] had been talking about a large bat that some people had seen on Friday night. A lot of the people who spoke about it were spooked by it. I never figured that anything like this would or could be seen in a city as large as Chicago, or a campus as busy and bustling as UIC.

It totally makes me wonder what it truly was and if it meant us any harm.

People have a lot of problems with this report. They wonder why the witnesses never called the police, or why the people in the park never made their own reports. They think it sounds more like a creative writing project than an eyewitness report. And maybe it is, but we also have to admit that maybe it isn't. I was in college once, and this is exactly how I'd expect many

of my peers to relate a story they found impactful in their life; hell, it's how we're taught to write them.

Nobody calls the police anymore, by the way. Decades of watching disasters befall those who stick their necks out in the media regarding their weird sighting experiences has taught pretty much everyone that it's better not to talk to the authorities. That might be how people handled these things in the '60s, but not today. It's heartbreaking the number of witnesses who have related to me how they can't even tell their own loved ones what they've seen without being laughed at; yet they're expected to call total strangers who, in most major cities, can't even help you get back a stolen bicycle, let alone be expected to seriously investigate a monster that left behind no physical evidence. It's a problematic expectation to say the least.

The other emailed sighting report came after Manuel peppered the neighborhoods with flyers. It's a surprisingly effective tactic.

> *I am currently attending university in Chicago, Illinois and I wanted to respond to the informational flyers about recent events involving the large bat-like creatures. I was enjoying an evening with my girlfriend and taking a well-deserved break from my studies. We decided to go out and enjoy the unusually warm weather that we were having and go for a walk. As we walked toward a community park near the campus, we were talking about our classes when a commotion amongst a group of people caught our attention. As we looked toward the group of about four to five people, something caught my eye and I looked up to see this thing fly overhead.*
>
> *It looked like a man; it looked like a man with wings! He flew about 10 to 12 feet above us and was perfectly silhouetted against the evening sky. In all honesty, it looked like an immensely oversized Sugar Glider, the kind I would see back home in Tasmania. It had the rough shape of a sugar glider, but its eyes were nothing like the soft eyes of a glider. They glowed red! We saw it for about 4 seconds before it disappeared from view. At first, I thought I saw a man in a hang glider, but it was those bloody eyes that made me thing otherwise!*
>
> *I at first thought of ringing someone, but I didn't want them to think I had gone crazy. To say that I was gobsmacked would have been an understatement.*

I would love—as I'm sure we all would—to have more information about this sighting. It might even answer the question, 'Why didn't those witnesses in the park tell anybody?'

Maybe they did.

The Pulaski Road Photograph *(UFO Clearinghouse)*

CHAPTER SEVEN
NOTHING TO BE AFRAID OF

The sole encounter reported from 2012—at least so far—was in Indiana. It was taken by Lon, and sent by a woman who said she saw a "bat-like" being with "little red eyes" fly directly in front of the van she was driving on her way to the Indianapolis International Airport that summer.

According to her report:

> *A friend of mine just sent me an article on sightings about the humanoid type flying creature in Indiana. It had written in it about a recent sighting of this thing. My girlfriend and I both witnessed this same creature [in the summer of 2012] while traveling I-465 north headed to the Indianapolis International Airport around 3 a.m.*
>
> *The creature (Mothman) as we have been calling it, flew right in front of our windshield! It soared in between two buildings and came right in front of the van (taxi van, I was on a cab fare). It turned its head and looked right at us with little red eyes. It then flapped its wings one time and flew to the left really fast. The wings were so beautiful. I'll never forget how amazing they were. It was a very bat-like being. You could almost see through his wings. You could see the veins bulging from all angles of the wings and light that illuminated through them in the background. And I'll NEVER forget the eyes. They were piercing and felt as if they looked right into my soul. It was definitely a very deep feeling.*
>
> *And you know funny thing was? Even though this massive thing flew so close in front of the van, I felt I was going to hit him, I never once put my breaks on. And I think back about that and why I didn't a lot. I mean I'm a taxi driver with a chauffeur license trained to be safe and cautious. Yet I never once slammed on my brakes or*

attempted to stop.

Just thought I should contact you. I hope to hear back from you. I would like to know more about this thing. We wanted to tell someone bigger than just our circle of friends and family but didn't know who.

Lon was able to contact the witness for more information.

"I contacted [the witness] and her companion for additional information," he said. "She and her companion (in the front) were with two fares, a soldier and his girlfriend in the back. [She] stated that the winged being had a thin seven-foot body, brownish in color. The bat-like wingspan was at least 12 feet in length. The red eyes had a distinct illumination and were very bright."

That feeling of being 'pierced' by the thing's eyes wasn't unusual; what got me about this report was the sense of awe described by the witness when what we usually got is fear. Maybe this witness is unflappable, or maybe she has a hard time describing being afraid—but it stood out to me.

Even stranger is the next report, this time from an encounter that took place in Harwood Heights, Illinois in 2014. This witness said he wasn't afraid at all.

The witness, who introduced himself as Greg, called in to Coast-to-Coast AM to report his sighting during an appearance by Lon.

I was coming back from work [in 2014] ...about 1:30 in the morning. I pulled up to the driveway and something caught the side of my eye. I walked up the stairs, went to the window. I live on the second floor. I looked out to the window to across the street and I saw a crypto, if you will, a Mothman-type insectoid; small body, unusually large head, normal, no red eyes, and it kept staring.

I went to make tea, fed the cats, came back, rubbed my eyes to see if I was tired and seeing things and, sure enough, it was there. One important thing, there was no foreboding fear. None whatsoever. That I found interesting. I was shocked as many people that had seen similar things. I went several times. I would say about four to five times, just peering outside, looking at the window and it just stood there. I live in a small town near Chicago. I figured police would do their rounds or someone would see it. You could hear a pin drop. It's

a very small community, sure enough, no one was around. It did not faze me to take a picture. I did have a smartphone at the time right but overall no fear and absolutely, you're just there in the shock because you just can't believe what you're seeing. You listen to accounts but you never think you will be in that situation. I went back several times. I was listening to your show that night, peering out every now and then. It just kept standing there.

In the morning I went to see any trace of anything. It was gone, so, yeah. Above all, I would say the strangest thing would be I was not afraid at all and it shocks me to even say that now. Thinking back over the several months and years, I talked to friends, they have an interest in it—I kept thinking it was crouching like a runner would be so it could have been taller as many people claim to it being six or seven feet. It was almost as if definitely the body was much smaller and the head came to a point, almost as if, you know the old cartoons from Mad Magazine Spy Vs Spy, with the nose, if you will, comes into like a parrot's or a bird beak, but there's no beak, so it is very kind of pointed protruding face, if you will, but again, there were no eyes and there were no facial features, but again, in that humanoid design that's where the face would be, of course, so yeah, but the head was much bigger than the body. I guess just by seeing this small body and large head as odd as it was, I wasn't going to go outside and even look outside. I felt safe at home hoping that it might not be seeing me look to the window.

Greg's report is something of an outlier. I listened to his story myself, and he certainly sounded sane enough as he said it, although admittedly listening to someone speak on the radio is a far cry from actually interviewing them. I don't know what to make of the facial features he described; the lack of eyes and pointed, protruding face are unusual even in the context of these sightings—not to mention how it conveniently stayed put for him to periodically check in on. Combined with the lack of fear that he felt and his description of the creature as an "insectoid", I'm not sure what made him label it as a "Mothman-type" in the first place.

This case was weird in all the wrong ways, and I never quite knew what to make of it. But, like the other outliers in the investigation, I couldn't ignore it; so, it remained on the periphery, just innocently standing on the

sidewalk while I occasionally peeked out the window to check on it.

CHAPTER EIGHT
BLOOD MOON OVER LAKE MICHIGAN

I am loath to explain one mystery with another, but I find nothing wrong with speculation in the name of discovery. I won't tell you that Mothman is an interdimensional being summoned to our reality by two witches on the shore of Lake Michigan during the Blood Moon of September 2015…but I will ask you "what if?"

I spoke to a woman who identifies as a modern witch, and she was very sincerely concerned about exactly that. She told me she was worried that a ritual performed by her and her partner during the September 2015 Blood Moon was at least partially responsible for the sightings of a bat-like flying humanoid in and around Chicago. The ritual, held on the shore of Lake Michigan in Fargo Beach Park, was initially planned to honor the lake and moon, but was at the last minute switched to a kind of summoning, she said.

The spontaneous impulse came as a sort of feeling in the air, according to the witch, who described a sense as though "the veil between worlds was becoming permeable."

"I guess if people around Chicago start seeing monsters, then we'll know it worked," she recounted quipping to her partner.

The ritual ended up being meant to open a door between another reality and this one, and despite having a memory of dark, shadowy things seemingly pouring out of the doorway during the ritual, she said she didn't feel that the ritual was negative; although she did concede that the memory of murmurating shadow beings could have been a confabulation caused by the ecstatic state achieved during the ritual.

"I wasn't traumatized by the ritual itself," she said. "It was a beautiful experience."

The remains of the doorway drawn on the park's concrete break wall reportedly remain, but due to rising lake levels are only visible after wading a short distance into the water.

The words below were originally written around the door, and are still visible, she said.

MAY THIS EVER BE A DOOR
FOR THE GOOD PEOPLE
MAY ALL BE ALWAYS WELCOME.

The witch stated that her reason for coming forward was out of concern for the well-being of both the witnesses and any entities involved.

"My concerns are with people being traumatized, and the well-being of the entity," she said. "A lot of people are being traumatized, and the idea that I might somehow be responsible hit me really hard. The relationship a city has with its monster is important."

She recommended that anyone concerned about flying humanoid sightings in their vicinity leave a token or offering to the entity to establish a relationship, and that showing empathy is important.

"I think that they're here to help us, and that they need help," she said.

I don't know that I agree with that necessarily, but it could be true. We're all familiar with the trope of a rampaging monster who is really just lost and alone; homesick and misunderstood. One thing I do know is that these sightings didn't begin in 2015. If this ritual summoned a hoard of Mothmen into the Windy City, then it simply summoned more of them—because people had already been seeing these things for decades. It made me wonder if maybe there wasn't more to this, though; if maybe we were summoning them, somehow.

Let's say, for the sake of speculation, that these entities exist on the same level as human consciousness—think of them as spiritual beings, if that helps. What would the ecology of such a creature look like? From what would they derive nourishment? Well, they certainly seem attracted to fear. Could emotions be the 'food' of such an ephemeral being? Maybe they break through into our reality looking for sustenance during moments of highly-focused, energetic emotion—like the kind you might find being radiated during an intense summoning ritual—and maybe that also explains why they elicit such fear from their observers. Sort of like milking a cow, if you will.

Human consciousness is the single most important ingredient in magick, followed closely in importance by a state of gnosis—gained through either ecstatic emotion or the subdual of such using deep meditation. Either way, what you're looking for is an experience so powerful that it strips away the layers of self-imposed limitations that prevent your consciousness from directly enacting its will on reality—one's personality and all of its hang-ups pushed aside to allow for unimpeded communication with the universe. But if a being existed who already lived on that level, a being who dwelt in consciousness without all of the doubts and fears endemic to physicality, well, imagine what they could do. Damn near anything.

Admittedly, that's a hard pill to swallow for scientific materialists,

but my job as an investigator isn't to make mainstream scientist types feel better; my job is to follow the trail wherever it leads, even if that's right into the gaping maw of the impossible.

CHAPTER NINE
PREHISTORIC-LOOKING CREATURES

On a clear, early summer morning in 2015, an Indiana man on his way home from work saw a "prehistoric-looking creature" swoop over the interstate. Then a year later he saw the same thing.

"Around 6 a.m. in August of 2015 I was returning home from Michigan City, Indiana, traveling down interstate 80/94 westbound to the Broadway exit south in Gary," he said in his initial report. "As I got off the exit and approached Broadway, I clearly saw what appeared to be a prehistoric-looking creature flying over and around the area surrounding the exit, as I drove over the overpass the creature flew southeast behind a gas station into a wooded area. When I arrived home, I googled prehistoric birds and the picture of a pterodactyl was exactly what I saw. [Then in August of 2016] I was heading to work going north on Martin Luther King Drive in Gary about a 1/4 mile from interstate 80/94, again early morning. I saw the same prehistoric looking creature, reached for my phone to take a picture, but it swooped down and disappeared into a wooded area west of Martin Luther King Drive."

I spoke to the man over the telephone about his sightings. He described how a massive shadow—30 to 40 yards long—first alerted him to the presence of something unusual.

He was in his vehicle when sometime between 5:30 and 6 a.m. he saw a “dark, grayish” creature with “smooth, leathery skin” swoop down over the cars and trucks on the highway. He said the winged being looked like a “prehistoric bird,” complete with a pointed crest on its head, and he approximated its wingspan at around 40 feet—something he said he was comfortable estimating based on his experience eyeballing measurements as a carpenter.

“The wings weren’t flapping,” he said. “It was like it was just gliding.”

Some pterosaurs, which were reptiles, not birds, were of a size unheard of in modern avian species, with the North American Quetzalcoatlus being the largest known to science, having a wingspan in excess of 30 feet.

Furthermore, many pterosaurs were feathered with hair-like filaments known as pycnofibers, which covered their bodies and part of their wings—something that might not be easily discernible to a witness seeing one in flight.

The creature was about 20 to 30 feet off of the ground, he estimated, close enough that he could see its “huge, egg-shaped eyes.” The eyes were a consistent color throughout, with no visible iris or pupil, and were a bright shade of greenish yellow, he said.

“At that point I was freaked out about how close it was to me, and how large it was,” he admitted.

No other drivers seemed to react to the creature, according to the man.

“Nobody else seemed to notice it but me,” he said.

After he returned home, he searched the internet for images of prehistoric birds resembling what he had seen, and it was there that he found a picture of a pterodactyl that he said matched the creature he encountered.

“It was the first picture that came up,” he said. “And I said ‘That’s it! That’s what I saw!’”

He told his wife of his sighting, but it wasn’t until she had her own encounter that she eventually believed him.

And, just a few weeks after her sighting in the early summer of 2016, he had his second sighting in the same area—an encounter that was very similar to his first.

In both instances the creature’s appearance was the same, and both encounters ended when the creature flew into a nearby wooded area and disappeared.

Both he and his wife's sightings were all in the same general area, and their descriptions of the creature are consistent with each other.

Her initial report read:

> *I had the experience of seeing this big grayish prehistoric bird. It was 7:40 in the morning on a clear sunny day. I was driving down Broadway in Gary, right across from the gas station right before you get on the exit going I-65 South. I was shocked wondering why no one else noticed this creature. It didn't have a man face. The beak was pointy, the wings were really long. The wings did not flap. The creature flew low enough for me to just look up, and there it was.*
>
> *At first, I thought that I was crazy, so I waited a couple of days before I told my husband. I don't drink, or do drugs, so I know what I saw.*
>
> *After a couple of weeks, I saw it again in the same area, but not the same spot. Also, this one was the same but smaller. It did not look like a bat, or an owl. So, I googled prehistoric birds, and there I saw the best picture to describe what I saw. After that I looked up at the sky often, but hadn't seen it again. I also thought about reporting it, but people of course would think that I was crazy. It came to me that woody, dense areas is where they hide.*

Both Lon and I spoke to her over the telephone.

"I called [the witness] immediately after receiving her email," Lon said. "She gave me the exact location of the sighting, an area near a gas station that once had a fairly thick grove of trees in the vicinity. The trees have since been cleared. This is in the area of W 37th Ave eastbound between Broadway and I-65."

"This sighting occurred in the late spring or early summer of 2016," he continued. "[The witness] had just taken her children to school and saw the creature on her way home. She stated that the creature was quite large...the body was approximately the length of a van and the wings had a width at least double the length. [She] is positive that this was a pterosaur-like being, after looking for an example online."

"A few days later, her friend also observed this creature," Lon added. "Her husband witnessed a similar creature several weeks later. I'm sure that other residents in the area were aware of the presence of these creatures at the

time, but were fearful of reporting their sightings."

As has been typical in many reported sightings, it was news of similar encounters in the area that led to the witness coming forward.

"[The witness'] husband's friend told him about the recent Gary, Indiana sightings, and she decided to contact me," he said.

When I spoke to the wife not much later, she confirmed what she'd told Lon.

She described the creature in the first sighting as being as "long as a minivan," while the smaller creature she saw the second time was closer in size to a car.

The being was gray in color, with a crest on top of its head, a thin, featherless body, and membranous wings, she said.

When asked about the possibility of the creature being a member of a large migratory species such as a crane or heron, she insisted that it was not.

"This wasn't a bat or an owl," she said. "This was no seagull. It was no crane or anything."

I asked her if she thought a timeslip or parallel universe could be to blame, but she was certain, based on the images of pterosaurs she found and her own experience, that her sighting represents the survival of some ancient species.

"Something survived, and it's out there," she said. "This was too real."

Her husband, when asked, wasn't so sure what to make of the sightings, other than that they weren't of any ordinary animal.

"I have no clue on [the creature's] origin or anything," he said. "I know what I saw. I do know that."

The location of these sightings was in the middle of Gary, Indiana, about four miles south of Lake Michigan, between the Grand Calumet and Little Calumet rivers. The North Gleason Park Pavilion—through which the Little Calumet River flows—and South Gleason Golf Course provide a modicum of natural cover for animals in the area, and are only around a thousand feet south of where the sighting took place.

But none of that represents a realistic place to hide even a single prehistoric beast with a wingspan of 30 feet, let alone a breeding population of them. I didn't doubt either witness' sincerity—they sounded very much like they believed in what they were saying. I simply didn't buy that the creatures they saw represented an undiscovered species, unless that species

operates under a set of rules contrary to our current understanding of physics, which I'm willing to admit they just might do.

CHAPTER TEN
A PALPABLE SENSE OF EVIL

2016 saw a number of strange flying humanoid sightings.

On April 20th of that year, a woman—who agreed to let me use her first name, Paula—encountered a terrifying winged being in Wauconda, Illinois. She was taking the garbage out just before 6 a.m. when something drew her eye from across the street of her ground-level apartment near the Lakewood Forest Preserve. In the early morning gloom, she saw a huge, winged being.

Paula described the being as perhaps seven to eight feet tall when standing erect, but it carried itself hunched over, limping along. It was completely black, and from what she could see its upper body and head were covered in hair. The being had long, leathery wings which were partially wrapped around its body as it moved towards Paula, jumping forward similarly to watching someone move through a strobe light. The terrifying creature made an unnatural groaning noise as it advanced.

Paula felt a palpable sense of evil emanating from the bat-winged monster.

"This is evil," she recalled. "I'm seeing evil."

Fearing for her safety, she quickly turned to flee back into her apartment. After fumbling with her keys for a moment, she opened the door and turned around, terrified that the creature might be right behind her—but it was gone.

Exactly two years earlier, to the day, Paula was sitting near a window in her bedroom when she saw a bright beam of light "come shooting down" across the street at around 11 p.m.

"It was so bright and defined," said Paula.

The light, which lasted between 15 and 20 seconds, was an orange-gold color and did not illuminate its surroundings; nor did it move much,

making only a slight “side-to-side or back-and-forth” motion.

The light retracted at one point, only to reappear a moment later.

Paula fell back onto her bed in shock.

“Oh my god, this thing sees me!” she remembers thinking. “I had the deepest feeling this thing saw me, it knows.”

But the light retracted a final time and was gone.

“I heard a hum at the end, just before it took off,” said Paula.

Paula told me that she only knew a few of her neighbors personally, and unfortunately the ones she did know had not witnessed either event; although one of her neighbors with whom she was friends did take her encounters seriously.

“I don’t know what to say,” Paula said of her experiences. “But I know what I saw.”

The Lakewood Forest Preserve in Wauconda is less than 20 miles east of the Dufield Pond Conservation Area in Woodstock, Illinois, which would become the site of an encounter with an eerily similar being in late February of 2019. It’s also approximately 17 miles west of Lake Michigan and 45 miles northwest of Chicago,[AC3] in a region surrounded by forest preserves and natural areas.

In August of 2016, the same month our witness in Gary, Indiana had his second sighting of the “prehistoric bird” with the 30-foot wingspan, and four months after Paula saw her hunched over, evil, winged being in Wauconda, a man named Tony said he saw a tall, winged humanoid in the Chicago suburb of Cicero.

“In early August [of 2016], on my commute home, I got off the bus and started walking about a block and a half near W. Roosevelt Rd. and S. 59th Ave. in Cicero,” Tony wrote in his report. “It was a warm night and I could hear and see all the usual things happening (it wasn't unusual for me to see bats flying around and landing in or on a chimney). But this night something caught the corner of my eye; I figured it was just another bat and I really didn't pay it much attention. Then it happened again, but then I had this eerie feeling come over me...like something was watching and again I saw something swoop by, near an opening approximately 15 feet above me and about 10 feet to the right of me as I was facing south.”

“As I turned my head upward, I looked at the streetlight that was across the street, [and] I thought I saw something perched on top of it. I thought my mind was playing tricks on me. I started to squint to try to focus

more on what I thought was on top of the streetlight and couldn't see it too well because the light was in my eyes. It was only when I raised my hand to partially block the light [that] I could see clearly there was something perched on the streetlight that was very large in size. When I was finally able to see it better, it stood up. As I was stricken with fear and curiosity at the same time, I was able to see that its head came to a point with red-amber glowing eyes. It flapped its wings twice, and was airborne and took off towards the north," he continued.

"This is the first time [of] me mentioning any of this to anybody, but when I read the article about other people seeing the same thing, I had that feeling of fear and curiosity come over me again and I felt compelled to tell my story. I lost a lot of sleep over it trying to reconcile in my mind what I saw. It's real and when I came across the post, I got a flashback of what happened last year," said Tony.

Lon was able to contact Tony and get a few more details about the sighting, including the being's approximate size.

"The witness works in security...and is apparently well-known in the club industry throughout Chicago. He was apprehensive about being ridiculed if he mentioned his experience. The witness was walking south on South 59th Avenue when he had the encounter. He stated to me that the winged humanoid was dark in color, at least seven feet in height and that the wing span was approximately 10 feet or so. It was perched on two human-like legs. He also mentioned that he noticed a short-pointed crest on the head. There was no noise or sounds made by the being and when it ascended from the streetlight, it took two flaps of its wings and was swiftly aloft. He said that when this being looked at him, he instantly became frightened...and that this fear was imprinted on him. Tony was very forthcoming and didn't embellish his description of the being or the incident," said Lon.

That reluctance to go on the record is a common thread; I was surprised Tony let us use his first name, considering the risk of being recognized. But he did, and so did Paula. They overcame not only the supernatural fear inspired by these winged beings, but the much more tangible fear of discovery and ridicule—and for that I'm thankful. Not every witness is particularly concerned with being discovered, but I know those two were, so it meant a lot that they'd stick their necks out over this, even a little.

The next month, a woman said she saw a 'man-like' being with 'pterodactyl-like' wings gliding across a highway outside of Whitewater,

Wisconsin. She opted for anonymity.

Lon told me that “in late September of 2016 at approximately 10 p.m. CT the witness was driving east on East State Road 59 (S. Janesville St.), approximately seven miles west of Whitewater, Wisconsin. She was heading home after visiting her daughter.”

“Suddenly a 'man-like' being with huge pterodactyl-like wings glided in front of her and behind another car...flying from right to left at an altitude of 10 feet or so above the road. The witness was totally shocked at what she was seeing. The being's body was definitely human in shape...about six feet in length and the wingspan was at least twice the body length. The wings were membraned like that of a bat and never moved or flapped. The entire being was dark in color. There seemed to be a structure along the top of its head, but no eyes or facial features were seen,” he continued. “The witness' reaction was to hit the gas pedal and to get out of the area. The driver in front of her must have noticed the winged being as it emerged from the right and sped away as well.”

I don’t blame them.

This was yet another witness inspired to come forward after seeing a similar sighting posted—this time to Phantoms & Monsters.

"She had read my recent post in reference to the sighting in Chippewa Falls, and was advised by her husband to call and inform me about what she had encountered," said Lon.

The location of this sighting puts it within 10 miles west of the southern Kettle Moraine State Forest—a location known for its own strange phenomena—and Whitewater Lake. It’s a similar distance south west of Cravath and Tripp Lakes, less than 100 miles from Chicago, and around 50 miles from Lake Michigan. Not far from the other sightings at all, as the Mothman flies, and certainly not the last report we’ll get from the Dairy State.

Finally, in November of 2016 came a report from West Alton, Missouri—just across the Mississippi from Illinois and 300 miles from Lake Michigan. It’s the furthest sighting from the great lake, and I almost didn’t include it, but I’d rather err on the side of giving you more information than you might need rather than the alternative.

Lon received the initial report via email:

Hello Mr. Strickler,

In mid-November 2016, my son and I had been duck-hunting from a blind in the Upper Mississippi Waterfowl Area, not far from West Alton, Missouri. It was about 5:15 p.m. and we were walking back to my truck. I had parked in a small lot off of Harbor Point Rd. and we had to walk about 500 yards.

As we walked along the road, my son noticed a huge black thing descending towards the water's edge. I had never seen anything that large flying anywhere. It definitely wasn't a bald eagle or a crane, and as it got closer to the ground, we were both shocked that it looked like a human!

It wasn't flapping its wings, but was gliding on a slow downward angle. It was about 50 yards from us, but there was enough light that we could clearly see it. The wings were outstretched and were very wide. The wing shape was similar to that of a bat, but huge! The color was dark, almost black. The body was tapered like a well-built man with long legs. The head was small compared to the body, so I definitely knew it was not human. We were both caught off-guard and were mesmerized by what we were seeing. It landed in the thick weeds by the water and was obscured from our sight.

At that point, we both wanted to get out of there because we had no idea what this thing was. As we quickly walked along the road, we saw this thing crawling out of the weeds and into a small clearing. It was literally pushing itself forward on the ground with its legs and wings in the direction of the water. We could hear the sound it was making as it 'crawled' on the damp ground and mud. It didn't look like it was struggling, but it was an awkward way to move around. Though it had legs, I could not make out what we would think were feet. I assumed this was the way it actually moved on the ground. It slid into the water, then raised up a few times; like a swimmer doing a breast stroke. Then it disappeared into the murky water.

My son will not go to that location anymore, but I'd really like to know what we saw. I told a co-worker, who is also a duck hunter, about the incident. He seemed interested at the time, but I'm sure he doesn't believe me. I've never heard of anything similar to this thing, either around here or anywhere else. Do you have any idea of what this was? I saw your Google ad for humanoid sightings, so I

looked you up. We can talk if you'd like. Thanks.

And talk they did.

The witness described the creature's wingspan as approximately 12 to 15 feet, and the structure of the wings as very wide and bat-like.

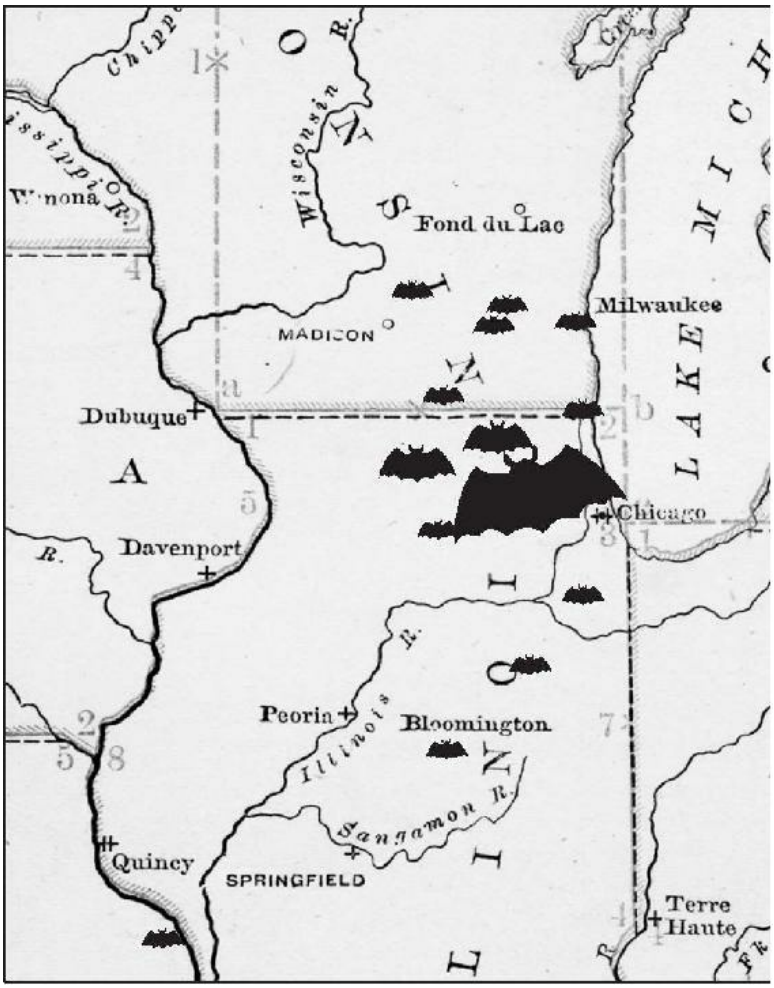
"[The witness] also said that the head was small and kind of shaped like a football with a slight point on the top. He did not see detached arms, but by the way it moved along the ground, the arms were most likely part of the wings," said Lon.

The creature reportedly made no sounds other than those caused by its crawling.

"I also asked if they had a cell phone with them and why they hadn't taken photos," Lon added. "[The witness] said he didn't even realize that until they got back to the car."

The witness's son has so far refused to discuss the incident.

That fear and amazement, the kind that freezes you in your tracks and makes you forget to grab your camera, that makes a person so afraid that they're happier never speaking of it again—that's the hallmark of this investigation. We're going to see it again and again. Don't let it become noise in the background. Don't forget it. These witnesses sure didn't.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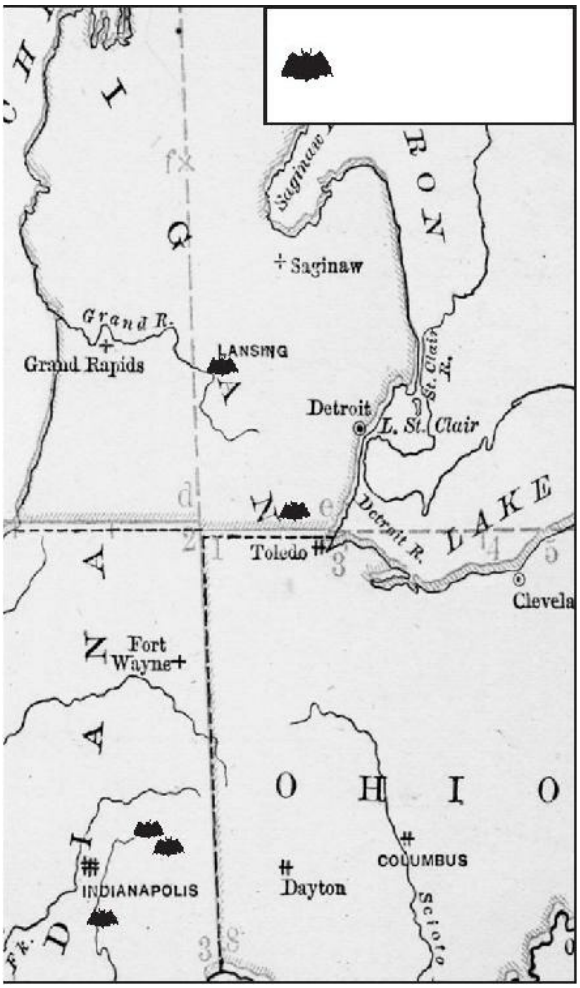
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Toledo
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Fort Wayne
O H I O
COLUMBUS
INDIANAPOLIS
Dayton

Scale of Mothman icon is representative of the quantity of sightings concentrated in a given area.

CHAPTER ELEVEN
2017 AND BEYOND

Until now we've been approaching the sightings chronologically; they were received out of order years, sometimes decades, after they happened, and creating a timeline helped me make sense of them. But in 2017 is when the investigation began; the sightings that took place from then on were more-or-less investigated in real time—at the very least we're only talking weeks or maybe months after the event, instead of years or decades. So, from here on out we're going to take a different approach. You see, in 2017 something else happened, too—something that would leave an indelible mark on the investigation, casting a long shadow of doubt and confusion.

The cases I published prior to that year were all classified as unexplained, with the only exception being the possibility that the sighting of an "all black…man with huge bat-like wings" that occurred near Rockford, Illinois during the summer of 2004 might have actually been of a large bird. Those potential large bird sightings were all over the place as of 2017. In fact, there were so many that I created a separate category for them in my timeline.

The categories of sightings were as follows:

- Large Birds: These sightings were the most likely to be a misidentified modern avian species or potentially anomalous large birds—think owls, herons, and cranes; or even pterosaurs and thunderbirds.

- Unexplained: These sightings are unexplained—they are potentially paranormal according to the nature of the events described and the evidence currently available, and represent the best likelihood of a Mothman-like entity.
- Potential Hoax: These sightings are the likeliest to have been deliberate hoaxes—the information given has been proven to contradict verifiable facts.

Of the over 100 sightings and associated high strangeness phenomena recorded in the timeline, 52 were listed as unexplained, 49 were listed as potentially large birds, and only two were listed as potential hoaxes.

Rather than focus exclusively on when and where the sightings took place, I began to categorize them according to their qualities.

I decided to include mundane migratory birds and avians of the cryptid variety together in the same category because of the blurred lines that made separating the two so difficult. I don't presume to tell witnesses what they saw unless I have hard evidence to back it up, and the fact is, it's possible that some of the sightings that sound like large birds could be of something anomalous, like a thunderbird—whatever that word represents. I've established my distaste for explaining one mystery with another, so I'm no likelier to try to explain these sightings with thunderbirds or pterosaurs (if there's even a difference between the two) than I am anything else I can't prove—but the fortean in me insists that I keep them available as options. Not to mention those sightings that, if you believe the witness testimony (and I always operate under the assumption that it's true unless I have evidence to the contrary), couldn't possibly be a mundane animal. We've already covered a handful of pterosaur sightings so far, and we'll get to at least one thunderbird before this is all through.

CHAPTER TWELVE
AN INVASION OF HERONS

The string of flying creature sightings around Chicago ostensibly began in the spring of 2017, at least that's when we began receiving reports outside of those received in 2011. Historical accounts were reported as more

people became aware of the phenomenon. Most of the initial sightings took place near the lakefront in Chicago within a few miles of Lake Michigan, before eventually spreading out deeper into Illinois and every state bordering the great lake. The sightings generally took place in the evening or at night, often in or near a park, and around water. Witnesses consistently described a large, bat or bird-like creature, although in a small number of cases the creature was described as insect-like; and humanoid features such as arms and legs were also sometimes reported. Many of the sightings were of something seen only briefly or were described only as a flying creature with few details, which left open the possibility that a large bird or bird-like being could explain some encounters.

Other, more specific, descriptions and mounting circumstantial evidence alongside photographic proof would eventually lead me to believe that birds played a sizable role in the phenomenon. I took some heat for that. Believers and debunkers alike are enemies of nuance, and it was often difficult to explain that just because I believed a few species of large migratory birds were contributing to the sighting reports didn't meant that some of the reports weren't of something potentially paranormal. There are layers to this, and eventually I'd come to wonder if the birds themselves didn't serve some occult purpose.

But we should start at the beginning. The years leading up to 2017 had seen an invasion of herons in Chicagoland.

There are two species of heron native to the Lake Michigan area that are likely candidates to explain some of the sightings: the black-crowned night-heron and the great blue heron.

Black-crowned night-heron have seen something of a resurgence in the Chicago area, and could explain many of the sightings seen at night in that city. These nocturnal herons are about two feet in length with a roughly four-foot wingspan, and noticeable crests extending from the back of their head. According to the Lincoln Park Zoo's Urban Wildlife Institute, between 2009 and 2016 the number of paired black-crowned night-herons living in Lincoln Park exploded from only 24 to 300; likely due to the destruction of the wetlands they usually call home, which drove them into the city. Then, in 2017, citizens of Chicagoland suddenly began seeing a large, inexplicable, flying creature at night; something completely outside of their normal experience. It was often described as grey or black, bird-like, thin, with red eyes, and sometimes sporting a crest—all attributes of the night-heron.

Its cousin, the great blue heron, is even larger at around four feet long with a wingspan of up to seven feet, and is often described as looking like a "prehistoric flying dinosaur." A sizable population of these modern dinosaurs can be readily found at the Chicago Botanic Garden just north of the city. And, contrary to popular belief, great blue herons' eyes are also adapted to vision in low light, and they can be found active at night—although they are normally diurnal.

Herons are migratory birds, most often found in the states bordering Lake Michigan from spring until fall—which is the time period during which almost all of the sightings since 2017 have taken place. Climate change has affected these birds' migration patterns, and they are coming north earlier and staying longer as a result of rising temperatures. They can even be found wintering in the Midwest during mild winters—something seen more and more as global temperatures rise.

Herons prefer wetlands, and will most often be found near rivers. Chicago—and the entire Midwest—has its fair share of wetlands, and the vast majority of sightings have been in close proximity to them.

For instance, four encounters with large winged creatures near the banks of the Little Calumet River likely represent large bird sightings. Given the descriptions, including size, color, and sound, they were probably sightings of great blue herons. Although, as we'll see later, there are multiple ways in which seemingly mundane sightings of large birds could be far stranger than expected, and I can't say with certainty what was really seen—I can only relate which way the circumstantial evidence directed my opinion.

The first sighting took place on April 27th, at 7:30 p.m.

> *I was out with my son by the banks of the Little Calumet, on the Northwestern side off of Hedgewisch Park at a spot where we have had some success catching fish in the past. It's located by the trestle bridge that runs east to west over near 130th street. It's a spot that takes a little effort to get to, but it has had some payoffs in catching some medium-sized catfish.*
>
> *It was about 7:30 p.m. and we were packing up our gear when we heard something that sounded like train brakes when the train slows down. The problem was there was no train going by at the moment. When the train goes by, you usually feel it going by, you also hear it as it's pretty loud. On this day, it was quiet with the*

occasional sound of trucks or cars going about. We heard the sound again and saw something fly from our left toward some trees on the other side of the river. We thought it looked like a giant bird, but it was solid black. Within a minute, we heard the sound again and this thing straight up and over the trestle bridge and headed off down the river. This thing was unlike any bird we have seen in our lives. It was solid black and had to be about the size of a full-grown man. It had wings that must have been 10 feet from tip to tip. It flew up and out of sight within seconds. We couldn't really get many details as this thing flew like a literal bat out of hell and was still on the other side of the river.

We stood there and watched it fly away, I was just blown away but then my son piped up and said he had read about some giant bat sightings that have occurred in Chicago lately, maybe this was one of them. We packed up our gear and got the hell out of there as fast as we could. We didn't want this thing to come back and see us there as we were not supposed to be there fishing in the first place. Later that night my son showed me the websites where the reports were listed and that lead me to report this sighting. I'm sorry that I couldn't give you more details on this thing, but frankly, I thank my lucky stars that we weren't close enough to see any details.

The second sighting was just over a week later, on May 5th, at 8 p.m.

I was out with my son at Calumet Park at about 8 p.m. walking the trail as we have since he was about six years old. We were talking about what was going on within our lives and about what our plans were for the upcoming summer. As we walked toward the field house, we were overflown by what I thought was a large goose as we have seen multiple geese flying around the city and suburbs within the last couple of months. As we watched, it quickly became apparent that this was not a goose, but something much bigger.

I can describe it as a large bat, but it had a distinct human figure about six feet in height per my estimates. It was blackish/grayish in color and had an enormous pair of wings that must have been eight to ten feet in width. My son was in complete

shock and asked me what that thing was, my response was an equally surprised "I don't know." This bat flew up and over the Fieldhouse and toward where the tennis courts would be. I heard a couple yell out in surprise as this bat flew up and over the Fieldhouse and out of view. The entire encounter lasted about 30 to 35 seconds from the initial sighting to it flying up and over the Fieldhouse and out of sight.

I estimated the speed of this bat to be at least 40 to 50 mph and it to be at least 15 to 20 feet above us as it was just over the top of the streetlights. It was dusk, but the sun had just started to set so there was enough light to still get a good view of the object as it flew overhead. I was only able to get a general description as it flew over us at speed and it prohibited getting any finer details of it. We went around the Fieldhouse and tried to see if we could see anything on the other side, but did not get any other views of this creature. The rest of the evening went without incident and I only decided to report this after reading some reports of similar sightings within the city online.

These sightings were taken by Manuel over at UFO Clearinghouse, and as far as I know, there was no follow-up after the initial reports.
The third sighting came in January of 2019, when Lon published a report from a woman whose husband had witnessed a "grayish" flying creature "with large wings that were similar to bat wings" near Gary, Indiana.

According to the report:

My husband and I live in Gary, Indiana. He came home freaking out tonight, Saturday, January 19th, saying he saw something that had to of been four to five feet tall with large wings that were similar to bat wings. He said it was a grayish color and it flew in front of his truck just inches of it getting hit, He said it flew up in the trees and disappeared. It was on Chase Street.

I don't know if it's the same thing people have been reporting in the area, but it can't be the Mothman...can it? I'm not sure but whatever it is, it's scared him to death.

Lon was ultimately unable to speak directly to this witness.

“The email was dated Saturday, January 19th at 11:11 p.m. [EST]," he said. "I have attempted to talk to the witness, but he is far too shaken and fearful this being will re-engage with him. Hopefully, the witness will eventually open up."

The fourth sighting, also in Gary, was also submitted to Lon in January of 2019. It had a startling resemblance to the second of Chicago’s Calumet Park reports.

"On Monday, January 22, 2019, I received a text message from a resident in Gary, Indiana," Lon said. "I called the witness...to discuss his observations."

“[The witness stated] that his family had been on their front porch one evening in late September 2018. This was on the 300 block of East 43rd Ave. in Gary, Indiana. Across the street was a small lot with several tall trees. It was a clear night and the moon backlit the grove of trees,” he continued. “[The witness'] brother or father noticed a large winged being flying near the top of one of the trees, and made the rest of the family aware of the being. The children were taken back into the house. [He], his brother and father continued to observe the winged humanoid...which was described as having a body of four to five feet in length. The wingspan was approximately 10 to 12 feet, but could have been larger. The entire body and wings were dark in color.”

“[The witness] stated that the body reminded him of a 'large monkey' in shape. The wings were bat-like and reflected in the moonlight,” Lon said. “All the witnesses heard a 'whooshing' sound when the being flapped its huge wings. The winged being flew into the trees and disappeared.”

As has been noted previously in other submitted sightings, this report came after the witness' brother saw the report of a similar creature from earlier in the week.

“[The witness'] brother contacted him when he saw my post of the recent winged humanoid sighting in Gary, Indiana. They had not told anyone else outside of the family. At that point, [he] texted me," explained Lon.

The fifth sighting, in Wheeling, Illinois, dozens of miles northwest of Calumet Park, was reported to Lon in the spring of 2018.

"I received a telephone call on Tuesday May 1st, 2018 at 12:50 a.m. ET," Lon said. "This was approximately one hour after the incident."

"The witness was calling for his parents, who stated that they witnessed a large winged humanoid flying above the trees and creek behind

their residence," he explained. "They were in the residence and observed the being for up to 30 seconds. They went out on their balcony to get a better look and possibly get a photograph, but the winged being had moved south and out of vision."

"When I was talking to the witnesses' son, I could hear them in the background," Lon noted. "They seemed a bit shook and had their son make the call."

Lon asked the son to email him with as much information as possible, and received the following email the next day.

> *Monday, April 30th, 2018, 10:50 p.m. CT, Wheeling, Illinois. Seemed to be around six feet in height, the wings were sticking out as if they were arms at the front of the body. The wings seemed to be perfectly stretched out with no movement of flapping to keep flying, but yet it kept gliding above the creek in the back of our apartment. The wings weren't straight flat although perfectly stretched out. They were facing upward in an angle. Flew over [REDACTED] and disappeared into the woods in the back of the [REDACTED]. This thing was also flying at 10 mph or so. This was witnessed by two people not just a single person. Husband and wife both saw this.*

"I was later told that the wings were like those of a large bat and dark in color," added Lon.

Lon shared the witnesses' contact information with investigator Vance Nesbitt, who visited the sighting location on Saturday, May 5th, 2018. Vance confirmed the geographical details of the sighting, and took pictures to provide context. He reported that while he did ask a few other residents of the area about the sightings, none of them had any knowledge of it.

The first, third, and fifth reports, especially, always struck me as likely to be herons—mostly because in the first report the witness literally describes it as a "giant bird," and in the third and fifth, the descriptions fit a heron perfectly. It's easy to believe that a heron's six-or-seven-foot wingspan could be mistaken for 10 feet under the circumstances, and the description of the sound the creature made is spot on for that kind of bird. The second and fourth reports give about the right dimensions for a heron, and in the second, the witness at first mistook the creature for a goose, which is good for our large bird hypothesis—but then he goes on to very inconveniently describe

the thing as “a large bat...[with] a distinct human figure”, similar to the “large monkey” shape described in the fourth report. It’s tough to know what to do with those descriptions; or it would be, if I hadn't received a video from a witness who described nearly the same thing.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN
THE PILSEN VIDEO

The witness who said he saw a creature with "bat-like" wings flying over Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood just before 3 p.m. on Wednesday, May 9th, 2018 originally submitted his report to Phantoms & Monsters via email.

Hi Lon,

I hope this finds you well. I am attaching a few photos I have from a GoPro that I use on my way to work. I use a time lapse to both save memory and it makes longer bike rides easier to digest. The first photo is when I was first alerted to this a large, winged creature gliding in the sky. I was riding my bike to work and this frame was taken approx. 2:50 p.m. on Wednesday, May 9th while I was stopped at a red light at Loomis/18th/Blue Island. I was heading south on Loomis. There was a strong headwind coming from the south and I recall fixating my gaze on the two flags above the library. Out of the corner of my eye, I see a man point up to the sky. At that moment I look to the area he is pointing and see what I refer to as the "batman". There wasn't much to report other than this creature was gliding the entire time I saw it, and maybe only saw it bend its wings half way.

I was not sure how long my visual would last, so I did my best of just holding my camera (which is a GoPro attached to my bike helmet) in the general area. At a later point, I do change to a live

video and while this is happening, I am physically able to see the creature fly, however it did not catch on my GoPro. Another note of the GoPro is that it is taken from a wide angle and everything is much further than what it appears. The other pictures I am including are the best stills I was able to retrieve from the time lapse, the very first time I can tell I capture the winged being on video, and I also have included a size comparison of the being as a plane passes in the distance. Again, everything is unfortunately pretty underwhelming and small due to the camera I was using.

I did not stop to talk to any witnesses or point out the sighting to anyone nearby. Mostly because I wanted to keep trying to keep the creature in view and I was also running late to work. There were no overwhelming emotions, other than slight amazement. A little background, I found your website late last summer during the peak of the batman sightings from last year. I mostly found it interesting so many different people claimed to see something otherwise inexplicable. I myself still don't know what to make of it. I would be more than happy to let you rip the original copy. I think it is too large to send via email. I am free to discuss this sighting further.

Lon was able to speak to the witness by telephone.

"I talked to the witness by telephone," he said. "He stated that the size was about six to seven feet in length and a wingspan of at least 10 feet. The wings appeared to be bat-like in shape and structure. He also stated that there were seagulls and other birds flying around it, but were so small in comparison that these were not seen in the images."

It wasn't long after that I spoke to the witness. He confirmed the sighting details reported earlier. When I asked him to compare what he had seen to images of birds in flight, he said that it most closely resembled a heron, but that his impression in the moment was of a large bat or someone in a wing suit.

"When Lon asked me to describe the being, I didn't have a good description at the time," he said. "The only thing that comes to mind now is someone in a wing suit."

He very helpfully offered to send me the chip containing the raw footage shot by his GoPro camera, which ultimately proved to be very fruitful. Unfortunately, the chip itself arrived damaged, but it did lead to

further conversation with the witness, who captured more still images from the video. Emily and I enlarged each image, and with each one, my suspicion that this man had seen a large bird grew.

I talked to the witness again, after we'd enlarged the images, and he said that after some reflection he was more accepting of the idea that a potentially known animal might serve as an explanation for his sighting, although he cannot be certain of what he saw.

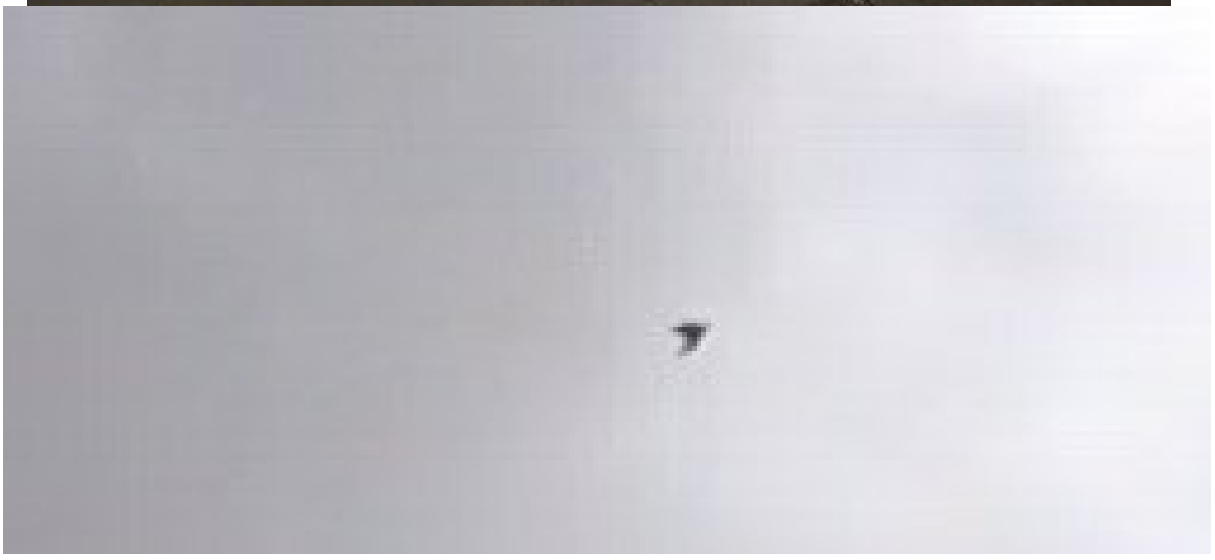
"As time has passed, I am still uncertain of what exactly I saw," he said. "Certainly, none of the birds I typically see flying are similar, but I am increasingly more accepting to the idea that this could have been a very large migratory bird."

"While not amazing, still pretty spectacular from a nature perspective," he added.

I agreed. I was grateful that the witness came forward, regardless of the outcome, because all reported information was useful in investigating the mystery.

I love nature, and even if this was "just" a large heron, I still think it's really cool—and it's an integral part of solving the mystery. The attention given to this phenomenon has caused many other modern and historical unexplained sightings to be shared, and that has proven to be invaluable to our work.

This case showed how deceptive our senses can sometimes be, and that it is necessary to question our perception of events. It also went a long way towards convincing me that a good number of those sightings that were otherwise devoid of any paranormal aspects could very well be of large birds. Those large birds don't really solve our mystery, though, not completely. Not only do they not explain the cases that couldn't possibly be a crane or heron—humanoid winged terrors with glowing red eyes seen in close proximity to the witness—but a sighting of a thunderbird just west of Chicago would prove to be problematic in allowing any mundane bird to be the go-to explanation for even those sightings that were definitely of some kind of avian.



A still image taken from the Pilsen witness' video. (top) Enlargements of three still images of what the witness at first thought might be a winged humanoid. (bottom)

CHAPTER FOURTEEN
LARGE BATS IN BROAD DAYLIGHT

But first we need to talk about bats. Something was flying around Lake Michigan in broad daylight, something that witnesses consistently described as a 'giant bat'. Strange behavior for the normally nocturnal creatures, not to mention that many of the witnesses reported these bats to have wingspans in excess of six feet. Flying foxes, the largest species of bat known to exist, native to tropical locales from the islands of Madagascar to Australia to Indonesia and mainstream Asia, only have a wingspan of five feet. But we already saw with the Pilsen witness how a bird might be mistaken for such, and the proportions described by many of those who reported their sightings fell well within the parameters of that possibility.

On June 17th, 2017, a jogger reported just such a sighting. The report was submitted to Manuel at UFO Clearinghouse.

I was out for a late jog on Saturday evening about 7 o'clock p.m. and was taking my usual route along the lakefront jogging trail

headed toward the Navy Pier. As I passed Ohio Street Beach and headed toward the Pier, I saw what looked like a giant bat fly out from what looked like under the bridge that holds up North Lakeshore drive. It flew parallel to East Grand avenue and then up and over the trees toward the water treatment plant. The whole incident only lasted a few seconds and getting any exact details was hard due to the low light. I can make an educated guess and say that it looked like it was the height of an average man at about six feet tall, but I also was maybe 15 to 20 feet away from it when I saw it.

It looked like a great big bat, solid black but it stood out against the building and had a wingspan that must have been at least seven to eight feet from tip to tip. It was silent as far as I could tell but there was a lot of city noise in that area with traffic and what not. I know I was not the only one who saw it as about six to seven others noticed it and I heard more than one person say "look at that!" As it flew, you could tell it was flapping its large wings, gaining speed and altitude till it cleared the trees and headed off toward the water treatment plant. When I reached the point where I could look out toward the plant, it was gone.

I checked my watch at that time and noted the time at 7:08 p.m. and the weather was cloudy. We had storms pass through the area earlier today and it looked like more were on the way. There was visible lightning over the lake at the time that this incident occurred. I went home after my jog was completed and looked up sightings of giant bats in the city and was shocked by how many there were recently. That is how I got the info on where to report this to you.

I know Manuel attempted to follow up with the witness, but I don't think he was ever successful. I did verify the weather data for that day, and it was consistent with the report; so, there's nothing immediately false that stood out. Seemed very much like a normal person who saw a giant bat fly over Chicago's Navy Pier—or at least thought they did.

Manuel received another very similar sighting just over a month later.

On July 20th, 2017 at 5 p.m., a group of friends were driving in Chicago when they saw something they couldn't explain.

We were driving down Lake Shore Drive toward North Avenue Beach. In the car with my best friend, my sister, and my boyfriend. As we were approaching the curve near North Avenue beach, we saw something fly out from underneath the bridge that goes over the street that separates that big black building in front of Navy Pier (Lake Point Tower) and the beach. It flew straight up into the air and out toward the lake. This was not an owl and it was not a seagull as seagulls are white in color.
*My boyfriend who was in the front seat with me was the first to see it and showed me and everybody else saw afterwards. It was freaky as f*** to see this thing fly up like that. It was like completely black and look like a giant flying bat. It flew straight up and out of sight I could not keep watching it as I was trying to drive and not get into a wreck. It was freaky to watch.*

An investigator with UFO Clearinghouse was able to contact the witnesses this time.
"[The witnesses stated that they] saw it fly out from under the bridge, it was flying very fast and was headed toward the lake. It was a large creature, solid black and had wings," Manuel said. "The driver was not able to give any details as she was trying to watch the entity and avoid getting into an accident. The boyfriend was able to give a little more detail. He stated that the creature was solid black, had a pair of large wings that were the same color as the body. It flew out from under the bridge at a very high rate of speed and cleared the trees in a matter of one to two seconds as it headed out toward the lake. He did state that it was headed in the general direction of the pier and the water treatment plant."

Another report from that area was received by Lon in September of 2017. It initially arrived in an email from a man who claimed to have seen a "very large flying winged creature" over Chicago's DuSable Harbor, just south of Navy Pier. The sighting took place on Saturday, September 23rd.

I own a boat at DuSable Harbor. Saturday evening at (September 23, 2017) around 6:20 to 6:30 p.m., my friends and I saw what could only be described as a very large flying winged creature over the harbor, just south of Navy Pier. It glided at around 200 to

300 feet by my guess and slowly flew east over the lake until it was out of sight.

I'd guess it was at least eight feet wingspan with an almost equally long body...if not longer. It was witnessed by at least three of us! So, I know I'm not crazy.

Lon was able to call the witness two days after the sighting for a follow-up interview.

"The witness and one of his friends told me that the winged being was gliding approximately 200 feet above them, flying towards the east...out over Lake Michigan. They had been walking on the pier towards his boat, when one of them noticed the large bird-like entity gliding above the harbor. The winged being glided a small 'S' shaped pattern, as it continued flying towards the east. It never flapped its wings," he said.

"The entity was described as a huge bird-like being, with a thin and long human body with long legs. The estimated body length was six to seven feet," Lon continued. "The wings looked like those of a huge eagle, but more triangular in form. The wing span was between eight to ten feet. The entire body and wings were very dark or black in color. The entire incident lasted no more than a minute or so, as the entity slowly glided away from them."

In August of 2017, within just a few weeks of each other, we received two callback sightings to the 2011 South Pulaski Road report and photograph.

The first was from a witness who said they'd seen Mothman "gliding away from Chicago" and into Elgin, Illinois. The witness compared the creature to "a person in one of those squirrel glider suits", but noted that there wasn't anywhere even remotely high enough in the vicinity from which a base jumper could launch themselves safely. Whatever they had witnessed, it glided smoothly in a straight line without ever flapping its wings, and looked just like the creature from the 2011 photo, only darker. The sighting was at 11:45 a.m., which even the witness admitted was odd.

This report was originally taken from social media site Reddit, with the witness providing additional details in answer to questions posted to the website. They sent the same story to Manuel after they'd posted it to Reddit, and as far as I know he was never able to speak to them.

The second was from a witness who emailed me through the Singular Fortean Society just after her sighting occurred on August 22nd, 2017.

I have been hearing about the "flying mothman" for a while now but was skeptical about its existence. I just assumed that someone was playing a joke and that the photos that I saw online were photoshopped. Until today.

I was driving down South Pulaski at around 4:55 p.m., right before 55th Street. I saw it soar right over the Shell gas station! It was really fast and I couldn't get a photo because it disappeared before I got to the light.

I guess you can say that I now am a believer as I saw it with my own two eyes.

The sighting lasted only a few seconds, and the witness compared the creature to a giant bat.

"There really isn't much more than that. I only saw it for about three to four seconds as it flew by," she said. "The rational part of me thinks that maybe it can be a giant Japanese bat that accidentally got shipped here through cargo or something like this."

"It honestly looked exactly like it does in the [2011 South Pulaski Road photo]," the witness explained. "And I was only a couple blocks away from where this photo was taken when I saw it. I really don't have any details as I only saw it for a few seconds. It was really fast! It looked EXACTLY like this."

I offered to call her and discuss it—I always do—but she said that she didn't really have anything else to disclose. Her sighting happened very fast, and she'd already given me what she knew. I appreciated her forthrightness and opted not to press the issue. It was an interesting report regardless, and it gave me plenty to think about.

A predecessor to these callbacks had been received by Lon from a man whose March 22nd, 2017 sighting had, according to him, led to a series of disastrous events in his life.

My name is Billy B. I drive a semi with a large carrier company in Chicago. On March 22nd, I was at Rosen's (Alpha Baking) on Cicero Avenue and 290 Expressway in Chicago. I was picking up a load of bread there. I noticed a flying object at around noon in the airspace to the south coming from Midway Airport. The

object looked like a man with wings—like Batman. I thought it was an experimental drone or secret government military test. After seeing the picture by the Indian statue, I am convinced it was the thing these other folks have seen.

I have three witnesses for that day and the text to prove it happened. I absolutely swear it was this "Mothman". The object was gliding over me and disappeared in the clouds. It is very loud by the expressway and I have had no recollection of screaming. Shortly after I saw this thing, I had a litany of strange health problems that are documented. My eyes are even messed up, like the movie and other claims. I have all the documentation to prove my story.

I hope I am not considered a freak after this but this sighting can be proven well before the other sightings were reported. I have nothing to gain by reporting this so call me if you have questions. The health issues are very odd and serious. I have had several MRI tests and a lumbar puncture due to the pressure behind my eyes. Now, these issues could be due to some other disease that has no diagnosis.

Lon contacted the man by phone, who told him that the creature he saw was “the size of a large automobile.”

"Billy B. has forwarded documentation proving the bizarre medical problems he has endured since the sighting...eventually traced to a rare condition in his eyes. As well, he forwarded documentation on his mother's death, which occurred unexpectedly [several weeks after his sighting]. I have no proof that these incidents are related to the sighting, but it is noteworthy nonetheless and part of the record," Lon said. "Billy was very forthcoming and answered all my questions without embellishment. I truly believe he witnessed what he described, which he believes was a winged living being because of the way the figure naturally moved."

These three sightings simply solidified my opinion that the 2011 photograph was no kite. Kites are of limited mobility, often performing loops and whorls in the air as their controller remains within a relatively small area on the ground; flying in straight lines and soaring over gas stations aren’t normal kite activities.

The following August, a sighting was reported to Lon by an avid birdwatcher who said she’d seen a "huge flying shadow" over a forest preserve near La Grange Park, a suburb west of Chicago.

“I received a telephone call...from a woman who is a resident of LaGrange Park, a western suburb of Chicago,” Lon said. “The witness lives near Possum Hollow Woods, an area where she is an avid bird/raptor watcher.”

“She stated that at approximately 3:45 p.m. CT on Tuesday August 29th, she was along North LaGrange Road watching the skies above Possum Hollow Woods and Salt Creek,” he said of the witness. “As she looked skyward, she observed what she described as a 'huge flying shadow' glide across the sky at approximately 100 to 150 feet above the trees. Since she is very familiar with the raptors in the area, this sighting shocked her. She later referred to the photograph from the Melrose Park sighting, stating that the shape was very similar.”

“As she continued to watch, she realized that this was an unknown flying being...and that the wings were broad and rounded in form. Then suddenly, the winged being dipped and descended into a vertical dive at a fantastic speed that the witness could hardly comprehend. As it dove into the trees, hundreds of small birds scattered into skies. She remained at the location for several more minutes, but the being didn't rise out of the woods,” said Lon.

Lon spoke to the witness very soon after her sighting.
“The witness found my contact information and immediately called me...only 30 to 40 minutes after her sighting,” he said. “She was very calm, and stated that she had a 'whimsical' reaction to the sighting, noting that it almost seemed that the winged being wanted her to see it and that it was 'giving her a message' that it knew that she was there watching it. She said that she was set to take a photo, just before the being went into the amazing dive into the woods.”

“Her description was that the body was six and a half to seven feet in height and that the wing span was 10 to 12 feet wide. The wings were rounded like that of an insect with no sharp edges, but were attached along the body. She did not observe any details of a head. She was emphatic that whatever it was, that it was 'definitely a living being.' The color was very dark or black. There was no sound,” he explalined.

According to Lon, who spoke to the woman twice after her initial call, the witness was "very knowledgeable about Chicago's history" and was able to add some potentially valuable insight into the continuing investigation. He added that she would reportedly "keep an eye out" in the

area, and other local preserves, to see if any additional sightings manifest. If she ever saw whatever it was again, we didn't hear about it—like I mentioned before, repeated sightings are rare.

That photograph she mentioned was another sighting report that fits the general description of a "giant bat" seen during the day. It was submitted by a woman who said she and her husband had seen such a creature outside of a Best Buy in Melrose Park, a suburb of Chicago. It was controversial, of course, with some people claiming it was an airplane (O'Hare International Airport is about eight miles north of the sighting location) and others saying it was something anomalous; but it only ever looked like an indistinct black smudge to me. It was a curved smudge that could have been a bat or bird—it could have been a lot of things. But the eyewitness said it was a large bat.

The photograph was submitted to Manuel, along with the report, on August 4th, 2017.

> *I would like to report a sighting that I had today in downtown Melrose Park, Illinois at Winston Plaza, just outside the Best Buy store.*
>
> *I was coming out of the Best Buy with my husband when we saw what looked like a large black bat that flew over the building. It must have been at least 20 feet or more up in the air and was solid black and flying very fast.*
>
> *I reached for my phone to try to get a picture of it, but by the time I fished out my phone from my purse, unlocked it and pulled up the camera the bat had flown quite a distance away from us. I was able to snap one good picture of the object before it got too far away from us. I am not the greatest photographer and my cell phone is a couple of years old already, but you can see the object in the picture flying off to the west toward the city. I did not see a lot of detail as it was up in the air and flying away from us pretty fast. I do remember it was solid black, bigger than any bird I have seen and had a large pair of wings that must have been seven feet wide.*
>
> *I hope the picture helps in telling what it was or was not.*

If this was a hoax, it was an unenthusiastic one. I never understood why the debunkers chose an airplane as their explanation, instead of a natural animal, other than that they never seemed to want to give the witnesses any

credit.

The same day at 5:30 p.m. another “giant bat” was reportedly seen just two miles east of Melrose Park in River Forest, also a suburb of Chicago.

According to MUFON case number 85664, the witness reported the following events.

> *I walked with my three girls to the corner 7-11 after my oldest got out of soccer practice. We usually do this after each one has practice as a little treat run before walking home. This day was overcast and quite a bit cooler than the previous days, which were very hot and muggy. After we got our slushies and other snacks, we proceeded to walk home along the usual route which takes us past the practice fields at Dominican University.*
>
> *We were all talking and laughing when I spotted what looked like a giant bat flying just above the treetops at the corner of Division and Williams Street, where we cross the road to head toward home. I showed it to my girls as the bat turned toward where we were standing. This sudden move scared my five and seven-year-old, who cowered down and screamed. The bat was flapping its wings and flew above us and over football field. It then banked and flew off in a southwestern direction and disappeared over some treetops. We stood there for about two minutes, stunned, before I collected my girls, who were scared and sobbing and we continued the rest of the way home.*
>
> *The bat looked like it had human-like arms and legs, just a lot bigger and had a large pair of bat-like wings that it flapped as it flew. It was black with some grey, but there were no distinguishable features. I know what I saw was real and had to be a living creature, there was no sound, but it was a solid object. I asked each of my girls to describe what they say saw and they all agreed that it looked like a huge black bat. They were very scared and I had to explain to them that we might have just seen a very big bat and there was nothing to be scared of.*

Although the Melrose Park report made no mention of humanoid features, I found it interesting that, assuming this was the same creature, whatever it was would have been moving either towards or away from Lake

Michigan—dependent entirely upon which sighting came first. Unfortunately, no more information about either report has been forthcoming, and I don't know exactly when the Melrose Park sighting took place.

It really was remarkable how many of these daylight sightings were in heavily populated areas, and how often the reports would mention multiple witnesses.

Consider this report submitted to Phantoms & Monsters from near Chicago's Lincoln Park Zoo on September 7th, 2017.

> *As we were leaving to head home [around 7 p.m.], we heard a commotion coming from a group of people about 20 yards from us. We looked in the general direction of the commotion and tell people pointing up toward the sky we looked up to see a large creature with a giant set of wings flying over us barely skimming the Treetops. We saw it for about five seconds as it circled around the trees and then disappeared heading in the general direction of North Avenue beach.*
>
> *It looked human-like but had a large pair of wings which must have been at least 12 feet wide, if I had to go make a guess, and looked a lot like bat wings. It was solid black [with] no discernible features but you could tell that it had arms, legs, and a head, although they looked very skinny.*
>
> *It was flapping its wings repeatedly and appear to be gaining speed. After it disappeared, someone in the crowd said that there had been multiple sightings of this thing all summer long. That is why I got online and started looking up these sightings and reported it to your website. I do want to note that when the commotion started and for a few minutes afterwards many of the animals in the zoo were clearly disturbed and vocalizing as if something had upset them.*
>
> *There was no further sighting or strange occurrences for [the] rest of the night and we ended up going home.*

This was another of those reports submitted via email with no follow-up, unfortunately.

Two other reports taken that month by Lon were able to be followed up on. They were both given over the phone, and occurred within an hour of each other only a short distance away.

"The first sighting was at approximately 11 a.m. CT Sunday

September 10th, 2017. The witness, 'RC', stated that he and a friend were near the intersection of South Greenwood Avenue and East 78th Street in Avalon Park in Chicago. As he looked up, he observed a dark object slowing flying across the sky in a northern direction. At first, he thought it may have been a jet, but realized that it was moving too slow and that the wings were not that of an aircraft. After watching the gliding object, he determined that it was a human-shaped being with wings that resembled those of a large bat. There was no sound. He was not aware of the previous sightings, and was given my contact information by another person. I was contacted about an hour after his sighting," said Lon.

"At approximately 12:00 p.m. noon CT [the same day], a military veteran with aircraft flight experience was in the area of South Martin Luther King Drive and East 35th Street in the Douglas neighborhood of Chicago," he continued. "She contacted a friend, who then called me with the description that this witness had given them. An unknown being was slowly gliding across the sky with its wings spread. She stated that the wings were shaped like those of a huge bat and that the body was dark and smooth in texture. She also stated that it was not an aircraft or drone because it would not be able to maintain altitude at such a slow speed. It appeared to be a living being."

Lon noted the time and the relatively short distance between the sightings, and wondered if perhaps they were of the same being.

"I am waiting for more information from the first witness, who promised to forward an email statement. The second witness may also provide more information at a later time. The two sightings were about one hour apart and at a distance of 5.42 miles between them. Was this the same winged being?" he wondered.

Could be. It's not the first time we've seen multiple reports come out of the same area from within a tight window of time.

In fact, it was common enough that just one month prior to these sightings, Lon had received two reports submitted by an employee of a trucking company in the Chicago suburb of McCook, who was reporting on behalf of another employee and an outside delivery driver. The sightings took place six days apart, in the same area, on the afternoons of August 22nd and August 28th, 2017.

"I received a telephone call from an employee, 'LL', who works at a trucking firm along US 66 (Joliet Rd.) near Route 171 (1st. Ave) in the

McCook suburb of Chicago, Illinois," said Lon.

"He stated that 2 witnesses, one a truck driver from the firm where he works, and the other who was a parcel delivery driver, had reported seeing a large being flying along the Des Plaines River near the Route 171 exit coming off the I-55 Stevenson Expressway," he continued.

"The first sighting was on Tuesday August 22nd, 2017 around 4:30 p.m. CT. The driver told 'LL' what he had witnessed the next day," Lon said. "The flying being was dark brown and black with thick glistening hair on the body. The wings were bat-like, with very long arms and claws attached to the wings. The legs extended from the back and were together. The head was very small, but there was a distinct ridge that ran along the top of the head along the back. The body was quite thin and long, estimated at six to seven feet in length. The wings were very wide and spanned at least 10 feet. It was flying along the north bank of the river near the exit overpass, flapping its wings in a slow deliberate motion as it moved downstream. The driver was able to watch it for about 20 seconds or so after he slowed down."

"The driver was not upset, but surprised by what he witnessed. He said it reminded him of a 'small dragon without a tail', and that this being was larger than any flying creature he had ever seen," he explained.

"The second sighting was made by a delivery driver, who had witnessed a flying being on Monday August 28th at approximately 1:15 p.m. CT," Lon said of the other report. "The witness saw a large dark winged being fly high over the river from the same vantage point as the first driver. The description was of a 'large man with wings' that sailed high above the exit off-ramp at a height of about 200 feet. The driver observed the being from below and mentioned that it was quickly gliding west, then rapidly ascended into the sky...almost vertically. He told 'LL' that it was the size of a regular man, but with huge wide wings like that of a bat. There were no further details because of the distance. This witness had mentioned what he had told other employees at his delivery company earlier that day."

"An interesting aspect to these sightings is that I had received a brief report from a woman who had witnessed a flying being at practically the same location as these two sightings," Lon added. "I received the email report from 'JP' on Wednesday August 23rd around 12:00 p.m. CT."

It read:

Last night around 7 p.m. we saw what we thought was the

biggest bat we've ever seen. It had at least a 12-foot wingspan. Its wings looked like they were attached to hand-like appendages and they were connected from the fingertips to the feet. It was flying above I-55 near 1st Avenue on the north side of the highway. It was brown with a body similar to a beaver or possum. It was about 100 feet above us so we're just guessing at the size. All we know is that it was huge. We thought nothing more of it until this morning when I saw an article about a flying humanoid creature that looks like a bat in the Chicago area. We are now certain that the creature we saw last night is the same one in article. We didn't get photos but if you want more info you can call or text us. JP

"I made several attempts to contact JP, but I have not received a call-back or text," he said.
I don't believe he ever did.

The last report of a giant bat-like being we'll include in this chapter has a more direct association to Lake Michigan, and is oddly reminiscent of the baffling entity seen by that West Alton, Missouri man and his son back in 2017.

A woman called Lon on September 11th, 2017 to report a "huge bat-like creature" she had seen "circling above and along the tall buildings located on South Lake Park Avenue" prior to it flying out towards Lake Michigan.

"I received a telephone call on Monday September 11th, 2017...from a witness, 'PM', who stated that she observed a 'huge winged object' at 10:25 a.m. CT, just 15 minutes prior to the telephone call. This was the second time she has seen this winged object (previously seen in May). The witness lives on the 25th floor of a high-rise building at East 47th Street and South Lake Park Avenue in the Kenwood community in the south side of Chicago," Lon said. "The witness told me that she saw a huge bat-like being circling above and along the tall buildings located on South Lake Park Avenue and then out toward the lake. She stated that she frequently observes airplanes from her home, but that this object was definitely not a fixed winged aircraft. As well, she has never seen a bird as large as this being. She described it having a six-to-seven-foot human-like body that was dark brown in color, with wide black triangular-like shaped wings that closely resembled those of a bat and spanned at least 12 feet. She mentioned that the wings moved occasionally

when it gained altitude. The winged being eventually headed north toward downtown."

"I asked if she attempted to take a photograph," he continued. "Her response was that when she was watching the flying humanoid, she had an 'overwhelming creepiness' come over her. She wasn't paralyzed or unable to move, but was shocked and transfixed by what she was observing and never had a notion of taking a photograph."

"When I talked to the witness, it was obvious that she was shaken by the incident and exhibited nervousness in her voice...though she was very well-spoken and forthright," he said. "She stated that when she looked below from her apartment, she noticed people on the street looking toward the being and pointing it out to others. Other residents in her building have also seen this flying being in the past, having commented to each other and to the witness. The witness will be letting others know that I would like them to contact me and to forward any photographs."

Lon also recounted a story reported by the woman, who claimed that she and her husband had previously seen something strange emerge from Lake Michigan.

"'PM' also relayed some very interesting information that may be significant. She stated that she and her husband frequently jog the trails along the lake front together. On at least two occasions, they have observed an unknown creature or being emerging from the water...once near the lake shore along the rocks and at another time out a bit further. She described it as 'reptile-like,' but was not able to get much detail since most of the body [stayed] submerged. I asked if it was possible that it may have been the same winged being emerging from the water. Her response was that she wasn't sure. I'm going to look into this information much further," said Lon.

As strange as it may seem for our flying humanoid to be coming and going out of the water, don't forget what those father and son duck hunters saw in West Alton; it would be remiss of us to dismiss any possibilities out of hand. There are a lot of strange associations in this investigation, synchronicities that are obscure even by the standards of the metaphysical realm—but we do ourselves a disservice by ignoring them. We never know out of which dark corner the truth might come shambling.

The photo taken outside of Best Buy. *(top; UFO Clearinghouse)* An enlargement of the object. *(bottom; Phantoms & Monsters)*

CHAPTER FIFTEEN
VANCE'S THUNDERBIRD

Less than two months prior to the Pilsen witness' sighting, Vance, the same investigator who visited the sighting location in Wheeling, had a sighting of his own in St. Charles, Illinois. Vance first shared his experience in a private message thread to which we all belonged. He later solidified his story and emailed it to Lon in a format that made it easier to share.

Thursday March 29, 2018
12:30 PM CST

As a standard routine for the company that employs me, lunch time is usually 12:00 to 12:45 p.m. My job description, however, puts me on the road for the logistics portion of the business during those hours. With the upcoming Easter holiday, schedules have changed with some clients of ours and I happened to be at the home office in St. Charles, Il during the lunch break.

I was outside the building at 12:30 p.m. or very close to that time by myself.

I know by habit that my friend and co-worker Bill comes out to have a smoke around that time. I was facing south leaning against

the tall guardrail in the driveway, when my attention was grabbed from the top of my eye.

I took a moment to figure out what I was looking at and soon realized it was a bird. It had circled once in a huge diameter and before it was to head out of view. This thing was enormous. I say that by the speed in which it circled seemed so slow and it moved like a circling airplane with no wing flap.

I literally ran to my desk from outside which is only 10 feet from the outside door to get my phone in hope of getting some sort of picture. I ran back out and now I began to shake as to what I'm seeing. Just then Bill came outside and said "What?" since he saw me scanning the sky with my phone on camera mode.

It only took him a second to see it too.

This thing was flying over our heads at about 900 to 1000 feet up.

I have spent 13 years in the aviation business and it's a habit to identify planes by nature. For the business that Bill and myself do for a living, we both have a great sense of movement and judgement for distance.

I said out loud that the wingspan of this creature was at least eight feet and I compared it to the length of a horse and or cow. Bill was wowed by it as I was too. I mentioned before that I was shaking from excitement and shock; I think, while trying to capture those photos. I have to say while this all took place in less than a minute (including me running for my phone) we both were left saying WTF? That was freaking huge.

I'm pretty well versed in the large bird variety around northern Illinois. St. Charles is 30 miles due west of Chicago. Sandhill Cranes are in migration right now and most all cranes fly in groups.

As a matter of fact, I've never seen one solo in flight or on the ground. Herons and Egrets are more visible now with warmer weather coming as well as the Turkey Vultures. I know for certain that this creature we saw was at least double in size to the Sandhills and would dwarf a Vulture. I should include that I have seen a number of Bald Eagles here too on the Fox River which runs through St. Charles. Again, whatever we saw was so much bigger and

traveled what seemed so slow from south to north. The wings showed no typical fingers on the tips as the other birds mentioned have and I found that to be odd. The body and wings were a solid black in color, it was very uniformed. I did feel strongly however that this being was a bird and not a flying humanoid. Funny thing, I'm still shaking while writing this.

I'd be really interested in facts and not exploited stories about what this creature is. I am unaware of any wingspan larger than a crane in North America. I wouldn't rule out a Condor however the long thin legs trailing behind made this all the odder.

Vance's sighting is interesting in that not only is he a credible source, but there's no way, according to his testimony, that what he saw was a normal bird. A bird, certainly; but normal? Not likely.

I had to contend with the idea that what I thought could be sightings of large migratory birds were possibly of something far from mundane.

Photographs taken 40 miles west of Chicago by investigator Vance Nesbitt.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN
THINGS GLIMPSED ONLY BRIEFLY IN THE DARK

Many of the sightings were of things glimpsed only briefly in the dark. They could have been of large birds, or perhaps not; like I mentioned earlier, it's not my habit to tell people what they saw if I can't prove it. But the circumstantial evidence is there, and ignoring it does us no good. The final determination is for each of us to make on our own.

A video from June 25th, 2018 appeared to show a "large flying creature" captured on a home security camera in Rantoul, Illinois. The video was accompanied by the following description:

Large flying creature caught on home security camera at 2:19 a.m. June 25, 2018. This was recorded in Rantoul, Illinois.

The village of Rantoul is about 120 miles south/southwest of the cities of Chicago, Illinois and Gary, Indiana.

A large creature or object can be seen flying across the screen and in front of an exterior light at about the four second mark, but details are otherwise scant.

I commented on the video to request further information from the witness who posted it.

In response, the witness confirmed that the streetlight behind the 'creature' is approximately 65 feet from their garage.

"The camera is sitting inside of the house pointed toward [the] driveway in front of [my] garage," the witness said. "It is a very normal streetlight."

Emily thought that the ‘creature’ was likely between the streetlight and the vehicle.

“Based on how the thing is backlit, I’d put it between the vehicle and the light,” she said. “If it was closer to the camera, I’d expect it to be illuminated like the vehicle, and it would be casting a shadow. Also, if it was small and extremely close to the camera, it should appear fuzzier than it does.”

Some speculated that it could have been a normal-sized bat between the car and the camera, reasoning that a larger creature between the streetlight and the vehicle would have cast a huge shadow.

“Is that possible? Sure,” Emily said. “But it’s also possible that the creature’s shadow is being cast somewhere we can’t see it, like between the vehicle and the camera. It’s all dependent on the size of the creature and its angle in relation to the light, things that aren’t readily apparent from the video.”

The flying object can be seen blocking the light, but appears to have a negligible effect on the illumination of the vehicle. The lighting does change as it passes in front of the streetlight, but only minimally; lens flare disappears from one frame to the next, and the illumination of the car’s hood and windshield dims slightly.

The camera has caught nothing else unusual to date.

"Nothing before or after," the witness said. "I check every day."

The flying ‘creature’ in that video could have been a lot of things, hell, it could have been almost anything, but it captured almost perfectly the experience of those witnesses who only knew that they’d seen something strange come out of the darkness.

A man in Tinley Park said he’d been out walking his dog just past midnight in March of 2017 when he heard a “swoooshhhh” overhead.

“My name is [redacted] and I believe I have seen the Mothman. My encounter took place back in March. It was in Tinley Park at the corner of 174th PL and 66th Ave,” he said in an email to Lon.

> *I was walking my dog at around midnight and he suddenly stopped at the corner. As I looked down at him, I saw him staring off. As I looked up, I saw and heard something “swoooshhhh” overhead.*

I didn't know what it was. I have heard of big birds coming down and taking small dogs (we have a Pomeranian) so naturally I looked around more for what it may have been and began walking toward a tree in front of a house.

As I got to the tree, I noticed my dog looking across the street. So, I tried to see where he was looking. And my eyes went up to the rooftop across the street and there is when I noticed something big on the top of the roofline. It was as if it was crouching. I didn't know what the heck it was, so I slowly moved toward it while fumbling to get my phone. As I turned the LED light on my phone, and aimed it at the roof (not a very bright light) I kept walking towards it. As I got about halfway in the street with my dog behind me, it seemed to have shot up and then it took a sharp downward turn down behind that house.

It was something big. As I have told people, as that thing was crouched on the rooftop, it was almost next to the chimney and it made the chimney look small.

In a later correspondence he added:

Our dog liked taking late night walks. From what I saw when it flew above us it was not black in color, it was more of a dark brown. Because at the corner where we were standing are telephone poles and a streetlight at the end of the street where we were. This helped in showing the color a bit.

It was hard to get a specific description of it. I just know that it was big. The way it sat on the roofline and the lights behind it from the train station and bars in the downtown area, that back lighting helped in me seeing the crouched positioning it was in. The way it was crouching, it had bold shoulders. Odd, kind of the way a wide gargoyle would be perched. I can't say the eyes were red though. It was just a slight reflection cat/dog eye reflection if you know what I mean. All dark in color except for the reflections. That is the reason I was trying to get my phone out to try to shine more light at it. It was odd.

You'd figure that our dog would have been going nuts at it, but it wasn't. It seemed just as intrigued as I was.

When it did leave the roof, it kind of shot up a couple feet and then shot straight down behind the house. And it was gone.

I carried a streamlight after that. But, of course, I didn't get to see it again.

Not many people do. Repeated sightings are by far the exception.

But what's not unusual is for one sighting to inspire the reporting of another. Consider this report received by Phantoms & Monsters in September of 2017.

I've been scanning the internet trying to find anything that resembles what I saw about one week ago today here in Lansing, Michigan. Your articles on the Chicago bat creature/owlman/mothman seem to be the closest I could find. Especially the article titled 'Big Winged Being Observed on Chicago Suburb Home Roof.'

It was about 5:45 a.m. and I was preparing to leave for work. As usual, I glanced out of my small bathroom window to see if it was raining. It was very calm and dry that morning, but then I noticed an unusual shape on my neighbor's rooftop. Obviously, the sun was not up yet, but it was just bright enough that I could see the outline. I enclosed a picture drawn with Microsoft paint.[AC4] *I do own a cellphone, but it's one of those cheap Consumer Cellular ones, and those are worthless in low light. I stared at the figure for about 30 seconds and it never moved. There was tree foliage behind the creature. I'm thinking it may have been sitting (or perched) just on the other side of the roof, as I never saw a head, or glowing eyes. It's hard to guess on the size of the being as I only saw the wings. I was about 20 feet away from it. I wished I had stared at it longer or even shined a flashlight on it, but I didn't want to be late for work.*

A follow-up with the witness helped clarify some of the details of the sighting.

"I asked the witness to provide further detail, if possible," Lon said. "He did state that the image he provided was wrong, in reference to the chimney. The being was perched on the other side of the chimney, but the wing was so large that it extended back in front of the chimney and totally obscured the witness' view of the front of the structure."

Perhaps more representative of the brief nighttime sightings was this

report received by Manuel:

> *I would like to tell you about an incident that happened on Saturday, May 27, 2017 near our home in Chicago. We were returning home after going out to dinner with some friends at a neighborhood Thai food restaurant. The time was about 10:30ish at night and we were walking hand-in-hand toward home. As we approach the intersection of [North Wrightwood Avenue and North Lakeview Avenue] my husband noticed something flying above us headed toward the west. It was flying approximately 15 feet in the air and moving along at brisk pace. It looked like a giant bat only it was way larger and solid black.*
>
> *The object would have been almost solid black if it were not for two glowing red eyes staring back at us. It flew overhead, circled back and flew over us again before heading back toward the park. This object was far larger than anything I have ever seen in and around the park or the lakefront. I've seen large birds in the area but could recognize them as birds and nothing grew even close to the size of this thing was. My husband said that whatever it was 'was not of this world' and 'if it was, it was undiscovered,' but he was absolutely speechless and could not provide an explanation for what we saw. We discussed it all the way home and afterward, I did some searching on the internet for a possible explanation when I ran across report sightings, some of them very close to our neighborhood. I showed them to my husband who still remains skeptical and said that we should not report what we saw. He stated that no one would believe that we saw a huge man-bat flying over Chicago and that people would possibly laugh at us. I reported it because I want to have an explanation to what we saw that night.*
>
> *Neither one of us are crazy and we both saw exactly the same thing. We just want to have an explanation to what we saw that night. My husband said he wanted to just put it behind him but if I wanted to report it, then I was more than welcome to…so that's what I did. Perhaps somebody can provide a perfectly logical explanation of what we saw in the night sky. Thank you for your time and attention and I hope to hear from you soon.*

Or this sighting report sent in to Lon from near Calumet Park:

"The woman and her boyfriend noticed a large black figure above a group of trees in the vicinity of 127th and Ashland Avenue at approximately 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, May 27th, [2017]," he said. "The witnesses state that they first thought that it was a black helicopter because of the size, though the distance was not determined. The object then rose further in the sky and became apparent that it was a large human-like being with wings."

"They described it as black in color and it was flying without moving its wings. They were shocked at the size as it silhouetted itself across the moon, which was visible in the late clear evening. There was still considerable light, but too dark to get a discernible video or photograph with their cellphone, though there was an attempt to capture photographic evidence" continued Lon. "They determined that it was not a plane or glider, but a living being of unknown origin. The description by the woman was that is looked like a 'large black flying man with wings.'"

"The woman, who did disclose her name to me, was disturbed by this encounter," he explained. "She searched the internet and discovered my posts on Phantoms and Monsters. She was surprised by the previous sightings in Chicago, which she was not aware of. She plans to be vigilant during the next few evenings and will be making inquiries of possible sightings by other witnesses."

"I found that the witnesses were very credible and made no attempt to embellish their sighting," he added.

There were many such sightings in Chicago. People outside at night, from Calumet Park to Lakeview Avenue to the Adler Planetarium, were reporting the same thing: a large bat (or sometimes a bird, usually an owl), often with humanoid features, and sometimes featuring glowing red eyes, flying around at night—usually without flapping its wings.

The reports would describe people out at night in the city, innocently going about their business, only to witness a winged entity beyond their ability to identify. These reports often did not contain the fear described by other witnesses, nor were there any accompanying aspects of high strangeness. The people involved could have been describing any number of things in the sky, not least of which being a few different species of large birds.

I didn't have the opportunity to speak directly to many of these witnesses, unless otherwise noted. Most often they'd submit a report by email to

Phantoms & Monsters or UFO Clearinghouse, and that would be all anyone would ever hear out of them. I do know that when Lon or Manuel did actually get a chance to speak to these witnesses directly, they'd swear that what they saw was no bird; but, then again, so did our witness in Pilsen, at least at first.

This witness in Chicago's River North neighborhood said that they "easily ruled out a bird" as the cause of their sighting when they spoke to Lon, but I couldn't help but wonder how they were so sure.

"I was writing to share my sighting of the Chicago Mothman," the witness said in an email to Phantoms & Monsters. "I was walking towards the Chicago Ave. Redline entrance from work when I made the sighting. It happened to be around 10:15/10:20 p.m. CT on Saturday, October 7th [2017]. I happened to look up to my left, when I saw an object drifting in the sky. Upon [a] closer look I was able to see the object was dark grey in color and seemed to have a large wing span. It started to drift up, but then dived down. It ducked between buildings but then reappeared on the other side. I was standing on Chicago Ave. and Wabash Ave. After the object reappeared, it passed between a few more buildings but then flew towards the lake."

Lon was able to follow up with the witness, and received further detail regarding the sighting.

"From my distance it was a little hard to make out details of the object," the witness said. "It kept moving rather quickly and very fluid-like. The wings were about equal length if not a bit longer than the object itself. They also flapped a few times, but seemed to have glided more than flapped. I could tell the object was quite large. Easily ruled out a bird."

Leave out that last sentence and this witness just described a large bird flying at night.

Of similar quality was this report received by Manuel after a witness had seen the timeline I created for the Singular Fortean Society website.

Hi, I saw that you were keeping a timeline of "batman" sightings in Chicago. My friend and I just saw something in Albany Park/Lincoln Square, about half an hour ago [July 29th, 2017; 10:30 p.m.], and I'm not sure who to report it to.

It was a huge black shape that appeared to be gliding high over the Wilson/Kimball area. We viewed it from my balcony about half a mile north of there. We observed it gliding for about two minutes before it was lost in

the clouds, headed south. It looked somewhat like a bat and that's what I thought it was at first, but it was just too big! It was hard to tell exactly how big from that distance, but I would guess about an eight-foot wingspan.

We're pretty spooked by it. Let me know if you have any advice about who we should report this to.

Perhaps no potential misidentification got more attention than the sighting reported by John Amitrano. John worked as security at The Owl in Chicago's Logan Square, and was outside smoking a cigarette one night when he saw what he later described as a large, "bat-like" creature fly over the lot across the street.

He contacted Lon to make a report.

"I received an email from a witness in Chicago, who stated that he wished to talk to me about a sighting he had on Friday June 30th at approximately 10:30 p.m," said Lon.

Lon continued, "He was alone at the time, except for a few other people walking along the street. He noticed a large 'bat-like' creature flying above the street lights, approximately 60 to 70 feet away, over the lot across the street. As the witness focused on the flying anomaly, he noticed that it was actually a bat-like humanoid. The body was five to five and a half feet in length and grayish in color--it was well-illuminated by the street lights. The head was human-like, but was much thinner and had a pointed crest extending from the back of its head; similar to a pterosaur, but shorter. The head was turned away from the witness, so he could not see the eyes or face. The body tapered towards the back and it looked like there were short legs or appendages tucked underneath it, followed by a short, rounded extension or tail. The wings had a full span of approximately eight to ten feet, and were attached along the body. The wings were a bat-like membrane, but heavy like that of a pterosaur. The witness noticed that the being flapped its wings to gain speed and height, then would glide. There was no sound. It was moving swiftly above the street lights across North Milwaukee Avenue, then burst upwards into the clouds. He was not sure if there were other witnesses, since the being flew by quickly."

John claimed to have left his phone inside of the bar to charge, and said he was "very upset he didn't have it because he would have had time to get a possible photo." He also said that he did not feel any fear or foreboding, but that he was startled by the sighting.

"[John] was very convincing, forthright and did not embellish during his account," said Lon.

John would later be featured in an article written about the Chicago sightings for VICE.

"I saw a plane flying, but also something moving really awkwardly under it," he was quoted by VICE. "It didn't look like a bat so much as what illustrations of pterodactyls look like, with the slenderness of its head and its wing shape. I know what birds and what bats look like. This thing didn't have any feathers or fur, and it didn't fly like anything I've ever seen."

Just prior to that interview, John was interviewed by local investigator Jack Vex, who recorded their conversation. John remained consistent in his recounting each time, maintaining the strangeness of what he'd seen.

"Our world is a lot stranger than I think a lot of people give it credit for," he told Jack. "Again, I don't know what I saw. I don't know if it's a creature, I don't know if it's a guy in a suit. It wasn't something that you would find in like a book about animals...It's nothing I've ever seen before."

The irritating conundrum here was that the more I looked for a mundane explanation, the more the witness testimony seemed to confound any attempt I made to do so.

Other theories that were popular at the time included a Halloween costume attached to a drone, and a seemingly-suicidal base jumper in a wingsuit. I didn't put much stock in those two theories, especially for nocturnal sightings. No such drone or base jumper was ever found, and the difficulties of performing the aerial maneuvers described by witnesses—swooping under bridges and between buildings—would have likely left a few crashed drones and dead base jumpers to help solve the mystery. The reported maneuvers could only safely be performed by a bird—or a Mothman.

The image provided by the witness in Lansing, Michigan. *(Phantoms & Monsters)*

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN
WEIRD ONE-OFFS

This was compounded by even more high strangeness. In a comment to an article about Mothman that appeared on the True Strange Library website, a woman recounted something seen by her husband while he was driving at night near Chicago.

The following sighting occurred on February 8th, 2017, just after midnight.

"Ok this is crazy. Back on February 8th just after 1 a.m., I messaged a medium friend of mine," the woman commented. "I'll copy and paste the message I sent…"

> *Hey sorry to bother you but you [were] the first person I thought to ask about this….*
> *what do you think of this and what do you think it means?*
> *My husband John (who's a huge skeptic as we all know and doesn't believe in stuff like this) was just driving home in the dark, and he saw what he thought was a person running on two legs across the highway and then it turned into a giant black bird and flew up [and] away.*
> *He swears it was running on two legs then was the biggest bird he ever saw flying with long legs???*
> *What are your thoughts? Sounds creepy to me? Shapeshifter, angel, demon???*
> *He's all creeped out now*
> *Lol*

"We came to the conclusion [it may be] a shapeshifter," she said. "This happened on 294 [south] near 111th shortly after midnight. Between

Worth and Chicago Ridge, [Illinois]."

"Then today my friend messaged me asking if my husband thinks it's a mothman," she continued. "We googled it and this popped up? Crazy! He said it sounds exactly like what he saw. My husband doesn't believe in stuff like this and when he got home, he was white in the face with goosebumps. If anyone else had told me what he saw I wouldn't [have] believed it, but coming from my husband I knew it was true. What does everyone think it means? "

Interstate 294 runs outside of the western portion of Chicago, and this sighting would have been around 10 miles away from Lake Michigan. There's no denying the proximity of this sighting to the others, and the inclusion of that transformation into a big bird gave me pause. One of the mid-April MUFON reports had specifically referenced a shapeshifting witch —the Lechuza.

The link here is tenuous, and the source unverified; I probably wouldn't have included it in the record myself. But it's in there, so we might as well see what we can learn from it.

He might have seen a large bird like a crane or heron take flight. They have long legs, and if you saw one running across a highway, I wouldn't blame you for being surprised by it. But mistaking a bird, even one the size of a crane or heron, for a person is a stretch; despite the late hour, I'd think most people could tell the difference. However, it is possible, and if the Pilsen video taught us nothing else, it is that sometimes perception is a funny thing, and we can't always trust our senses.

I won't use that as an excuse often, trust me. It's the lazy debunker who blames every sighting on incompetent observation. But if there are other factors present pointing me in that direction, then I'm willing to entertain it. Perhaps a combination of fatigue, darkness, and brevity caused a long-legged crane or heron to appear as a person just prior to it taking off; or perhaps something stranger is at work.

We've already met one family who claimed to have been stalked for decades by a shapeshifting flying humanoid, after all.

Similarly strange was this report received by Lon on July 24th, 2017.

"I received a telephone call from the witness, Guillermo, who stated that he witnessed a flying, human-like being at approximately 5:10 p.m. CT," Lon said. "There was a time difference of 1 hour 18 mins between the sighting and the call. The witness stated he was attempting to calm down and

then find somewhere to report this sighting. He found my telephone number online and then called. He still seemed somewhat distressed when we talked."

"The witness stated that he was outside the Franklin Tap on 325 South Franklin Street while smoking a cigarette. He was alone at the time, though there were many people walking along the sidewalk. He happened to look up towards the Willis Tower at 233 South Wacker Drive, and noticed a human-like figure standing near the top of the building. In a perched position, the being looked like a six-foot human with tall wings that extended a few feet above the body. As he watched, the being leaped off the building, stretched out the wings, dipped and swooped upwards. It gained altitude as it flapped its wings and headed off in a northern direction," he explained. "The witness states that the being's outstretched wings were not very large, maybe six to eight feet from tip to tip, but were very jagged and insect-like—shaped similar to a moth. The being was also dark green in color and had a body form like that of a mantis. The legs seemed to be human-like and extended beyond the body while flying. He called it a 'human, insect and bird mix'...that seemed to mutate while in flight."

"The witness tells me that he had not heard of any of the previous sightings, and that other people he talked to were unaware of the sightings as well. I asked the witness to stay in touch...I have his contact information," added Lon.

This report was odd, to say the least. It's one of only two reports to describe an insect-like being, the other being our sighting out of Harwood Heights in 2014, and the use of the word 'mutate' implies a mutable quality like in our accounts of shapeshifters. The creature defies categorization in every way other than its general size, which is the only thing that matches the descriptions from other reports. Its details are confusing and inconvenient, and thus perfectly fortean; I can't simply discard them, or this report. Unfortunately, I also don't yet know what to do with them.

There's one more report to add to our weird one-offs, a report equally uncategorizable.

Lon corresponded with a witness via email who said he'd seen an unusual pair of lights seen near a golf course in Whiting, Indiana, several miles southeast of Chicago.

The sighting took place on Saturday, July 1st, 2017, around 10:30 p.m.

I listened to the show on Coast to Coast AM and heard about the [Lake Michigan Mothman]. I believe I may have seen it near the Lost Marsh Golf Course, right off Calumet Avenue (I-41) in Whiting, Indiana; approximately a half mile east of the Illinois/Indiana border.

So, this possible sighting happened on Saturday, July 1st, 2017 around 10:30 p.m. CT. We were heading home from my sister's house. My wife was driving [and] I was the passenger. The kids were sleeping in the back seat and I was just enjoying the ride home. I was looking out my window and noticed two red lights in an area where there are usually no lights. I even told my wife "Hey, I just saw two red lights." I thought it was a little strange but nothing more. I had no strange feelings, but when I started to think of the two lights, they must have been over the water around 10 feet. The red lights were [at] about a 45-degree angle and kind of close to each other.

We take that route all the time and there is no light pole or anything in that area...just water. I thought it could have been a golf cart, but why would they only be using red lights. That little piece of course has no lighting and the street also doesn't have any lighting. The BP Whiting Refinery, approximately one mile away, is way too far away for what I saw. Basically, two strange red lights over the watery part of a golf course.

"The 'red lights' were within 100 to 200 ft from the point of observation by the witness...and were close together. Did the witness see the red eyes of one of these humanoids?" asked Lon.Maybe. I checked the geographical data and couldn't find any stationary objects to explain the lights, nor did any mundane explanations come immediately to mind. There are a number of things it could have been, of course; there's a decent-sized body of water present and somebody could have been out on it with two red lights for some reason. But we can't know for sure, any more than we can know that they were red eyes as opposed to a more traditional type of UFO.

An intriguing corroboration came later when local investigator Mark Hagan who contacted Lon to say that, in the summer of 2018, he had twice seen a "bat-like creature" near Hammond, Indiana—the same immediate area as our mysterious red lights.

Both of Hagan's sightings reportedly took place in the late evening.

His initial email contained a summary of the sightings.

It was August of 2018. My wife and I were driving south on Calumet Avenue and were coming up to the red light at 131st Street when we heard what sounded like leather rustling. We looked to the retention pond to our left and saw glowing red—what I am going to assume—were eyes and saw a large bat-like creature take to the skies. It was darked colored and easily had to be about six feet or more tall from what I could make out. Wingspan was close to 10 feet or more.

About a week or so later driving with my colleague in the South Shore Ghostbusters. This time we saw it atop the the Cline Avenue overpass like it was eating something. We turned around only to see it take off to the skies once more.

We have been investigating the area and found this particular creature sticks close to the water. We have heard multiple accounts of seeing red glowing lights over the waters of the Lost Marsh since June or so of this year.

Lon was able to speak to Hagan over the telephone.

"Hagan told me that he is very familiar with the large fowl in the area, and that this being was definitely not one of the indigenous birds known to inhabit the areas around Lake Michigan," he said.

Lon gave me Hagan's email address so I could get in touch with him. I was interested in having him show me around the sighting areas, but he never responded.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN
UFOS, CONSPIRACIES, AND COVER-UPS

By far the most controversial sighting of the investigation was reported by a self-proclaimed police officer in the Auburn Gresham neighborhood of Chicago in the summer of 2017.

It began with an emailed report to Manuel that described a "dark black shadow with wings" standing atop a building before taking flight. The creature sighting took place at 11:15 p.m. on June 29th, 2017, according to the report, and the winged being was also reportedly seen by a group of people in addition to the officer and the officer's partner.

> *I'm going to tell you about something that happened to me on the night of June 29th, 2017 in Chicago Illinois. I am reporting this of my own volition and I am wanting to stay anonymous due to the fact that I work for the Chicago Police Department and do not want anybody else to know that I submitted this report. I have been with the Chicago Police Department for over eight and a half years.*
>
> *The only people who know that I submitted this are my wife, my son who encouraged me to submit this and my partner who also was witness to this incident. I want you to know that I am of a sound mind and health and I don't want any publicity other than just reporting this incident. I also want you to know that I am not prone to fits a fantasy or hoaxing anything that I see, especially while I am on duty.*
>
> *On the night of June 29th, 2017 at approximately 11:15 p.m. my partner and I were on routine patrol and approaching the intersection of West 81st and South Throop in the Auburn Gresham neighborhood of Chicago Illinois. We were flagged down by a group*

of a people who were pointing up to the top of an apartment building that was on the corner. We pulled over and they immediately started telling us to look up at the building. Many of the people were very frightened, and were very excited about seeing what they had seen.

My partner and I look and see a large creature that was approximately six to six and a half feet tall and was very thin, if it had been a human it would have been emaciated. This thing was standing on top of the building and had what look like a pair of very large wings that extended out at least eight to ten feet from tip-to-tip. No discernible features, it just looked like a dark black shadow with wings.

My partner and I both thought it was somebody trying to jump from the building and maybe wearing a costume of some kind. When we both shined our flashlights to try to get a better look at what we were dealing with this thing took off into the air and flew away. At this the creature flew away headed in a southern direction; something sounding like a scream came from it, and within the matter of about five seconds this creature was gone into the night. The people who initially flagged us down had said that many people in the neighborhood had seen this thing for the previous two nights and this just happened to be the only time that it was seen in a stationary place.

We stood there stunned as this thing flew away and disappeared into the night. We stood there and talked to the group of people who flagged us down, taking down any information regarding previous sightings from the nights before. We initially were doubtful about filing a report because we thought we would be made fun of for seeing Little Green Men. We finally filed a report as we did not want to violate protocol. Nothing was ever said about the report being filed and as of right now it's been business as usual.

We wanted to file this report because after I told my son the story he went online and showed me that this is not the only sighting of something similar being seen in the city. I showed my partner the day after the [sightings] and he said that he didn't want to be involved, and as far as he was concerned it was nothing more than a large owl, or big bird that was misidentified. My son was the one who encouraged me to file this and do it anonymously to protect my

identity.

I know what I saw was real and even though I have no explanation as to what it truly is, I know that what I saw was flesh and blood. I am a Christian man who believes that there are things that come from other planes and stalk the people of this Earth and that only one's faith is what protects us from these things. I know that my faith is strong and therefore I am protected and I hope that I never see this thing again. Thank you very much for your time and have a blessed day.

Less than two weeks later, Lon received an email from someone claiming to be an aspiring journalist, who said she'd been there to witness the same thing.

Mr. Strickler, I hesitated to send this in for two reasons: first, I'm still not one hundred percent sure that I believe it myself, and second, I'm trying to be a journalist and I don't want this kind of a report to discredit me for future career opportunities. That's why I'm sending this anonymously, and that's why I'm not interested in following up about any of this.

I was talking about this story while drinking with my siblings the other night and my sister pointed out that it reminded her of some stories she'd seen circulating online.

When I looked into it myself, I was surprised to see that my story had already been partially reported earlier this month. On June 29th, I was walking home from getting Wendy's with a small group of friends when one of my friends pointed at a dark shape in a tree on the corner of West 81st and South Throop. The thing was big, but details were hard to make out at night.

Then the thing jumped out of the tree and flew onto the roof of an apartment building on the same block.

When it flew, I got the chance to see that it was a tall dark thing with wide wings. Nothing like that Mothman statue they've got in Point Pleasant. A group of people had started to form on the corner with my friends and me.

Then some of the people on the corner whom I hadn't met previously flagged down a cop car to point the thing out. That's when

my friends and I quietly slipped away. I'm a transgender woman and I've had my share of bad interactions with the police. My friends felt similarly.

I now believe that the officer I saw was the same officer who reported a story about seeing this thing on the same night.

I still think it might have had a logical explanation, but I thought there might be others interested in hearing this story and coming to their own conclusions.

Thank you.

Attempts to access the police report that the officer in the previous sighting report from this neighborhood claimed to have filed met with no success; Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests were returned with assurances that such a police report does not exist. This eyewitness report would appear to corroborate the officer's story; making the missing police report all the more mysterious.

That missing police report really stuck in the craw of a lot of people. I get it. I was one of them. The Chicago Police Department wasn't particularly helpful to begin with, and then to be told that the report didn't exist was frustrating. It was enough to make a lot of people write these reports off as a hoax. And maybe they are, I don't know. I do know that the absence of evidence isn't evidence of absence, and that nobody can say for sure one way or another.

Something interesting emerged out of another sighting report the following month, something that I thought would surely get the conspiracy theorists buzzing, but seemed instead to simply get lost in all the noise surrounding these reports. A witness emailed Manuel to report the sighting of a "big owl" flying over Lake Michigan off of Chicago's Ohio Street Beach. The witness asked for anonymity, claiming that they were a member of the city government's administrative staff—a position that they said gave them knowledge of the fact that the recently reported sightings of an unidentified flying humanoid in the city "have not gone unnoticed" by local politicians and city staff, but that they "do not want the increasing number of sightings to jeopardize the summer and potentially scare away tourist[s]."

The reported sighting occurred at about 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, August 10th, according to the email.

I wish to report an incident that I had on Thursday at about 7:30 p.m. in Chicago. I was out walking my dog and was watching storm clouds as they were coming in. It was then that I saw what I can only describe as a big owl that was in the sky above the lake just offshore of Ohio street beach. It was flying in a circular pattern and look like it was riding thermals as it was not using its wings much to keep it aloft but only gliding. I watched it for about a minute before it dipped down toward the shore and was out of sight.

I waited around for about five minutes even walking the half block over toward Lake Shore Drive to see if I could maybe see something from that vantage point. I saw nothing else and then headed home as there was a storm approaching and did not want to be caught outside in the rain. I had heard a lot of stories regarding these sightings but never thought I would have one myself.

I did not see a lot of details other than it was a black thing with wings. It was large as it stood out against the sky and you could tell that it was using its wings in flight. I tried to rule out a larger than normal seagull or maybe somebody hang-gliding, but none seemed to fit what I had seen.

I'm reporting this to you to add to your growing list sightings within the city. I asked that I do not be contacted in regards to this or that my name not is used. The reason being that I work for the city of Chicago within city government as administrative staff and do not want this to get out and potentially jeopardize my job. I am very sincere in my sighting and wish to share it with you but cannot risk losing what has taken many years to accomplish.

I can tell you that these sightings have not gone unnoticed and have garnered much attention but there are powers to be that do not want the increasing number of sightings to jeopardize the summer and potentially scare away tourist but please know that these sightings have not gone unnoticed within City Hall.

Thank you for your time and your attention and I hope that my sighting helps add a piece to the puzzle of what is going on in this city.

The rumors of a cover-up were nothing new, as it turned out. Lon had been hearing rumblings of such for some time.

"I receive anywhere from 10 to 20 calls daily from people who live and work in the Chicago metro area. People are very concerned by these sightings...and I always attempt to dispel any theory that this being is a

portent of disaster or bad tidings. In the process of taking telephone calls and emails from the good people of Chicago, some of the inquiries have come from city workers and citizens with ties to local government. So, the statement made by the witness, 'these sightings have not gone unnoticed within City Hall' doesn't surprise me. If this is actually a fact, then we can only assume that the city of Chicago has more knowledge of this flying humanoid than we do," said Lon shortly after this report came out.

There were other reports, too, that had a somewhat less defined conspiratorial air to them.

The first of those was reported to Lon in late January of 2018. He received an emailed report from a witness in Wilmington, Illinois, who described an unusual winged being seen flying past her home.

> *I live in Wilmington, Illinois, about 15 minutes south of Joliet. I frequent my outside steps in between 1 and 4 a.m. pretty much nightly for a smoke or two, and I'm constantly observing the skies out of pure fascination. I only mention this because I have never in the year and a half of living in this home experienced anything as incredible, yet terrifying, as this sighting!*
>
> *At exactly 4:36 a.m. CT, on Sunday, January 28th, 2018, I was sitting on my step and I, of course, was looking up at the sky, when suddenly my eyes were immediately drawn to what appeared to be a weird hybrid mix of an owl and a bat. To me the size was approximately that of a large raccoon...I even would go as far as saying it was a bit larger. For some reason, I was frozen solid with my eyes locked on this thing. I found it weird that even with how dark it was outside it seemed close enough for me to notice details of it to the point of realizing that it appeared brownish/greyish in color and the wings had a bat-like feel to them. I felt a little weird explaining to my husband that it was triangular and resembled the biggest moth ever. Instantly my head went to the Mothman no doubt! It was shockingly fast and it never made a sound...nor did it flap its wings. It just glided west and disappeared as fast as it seemed to appear. This creature even looked to have passed through a very old and very tall tree in my yard, and even though it was hard to obviously tell whether it went above my tree or literally through the branches, I still never heard even a small rustle from the breeze it would've created due to*

its speed. I apologize for the novel I am clearly writing, but I want to give you as many details as possible as I also have a couple questions about details from other noted sightings of this.

The most interesting part of my experience is that I felt and still currently feel a sense of dread and impending doom, similar to anxiety, but at the same time it felt like this creature perched itself onto my roof and was just glaring at me until I went inside. Whether this is true I don't know for sure, but I've never felt watched like that before. After it had essentially disappeared into the night and I was in disbelief I started to hear what sounded similar to a bat screech but with a lower tone, and definitely sounded much larger than a bat. It happened twice within about five seconds apart from each screech and I then booked it inside to explain it all to my husband. It is currently one hour since the sighting and I still feel as if I'm being almost preyed upon. I am very curious to know if others who have contacted you have had similar dreadful feelings and/or heard these screeches?

Please get back to me at your earliest convenience, and thank you so much for taking the time to read this!

Luckily, Lon was awake when the email was received, and was able to contact the witness by telephone.

"I immediately contacted the witness by email and then left a note for the Chicago Phantom Task Force," Lon said. "I received a telephone number and called the witness [later that morning]. The description of the winged being was that it had a triangular shape...reminiscent of the 2011 photo from 63rd and Pulaski Road in Chicago. The witness says that the being was flying at an altitude of approximately 50 feet and was anywhere from four to five feet in length. The wingspan was approximately five feet on either side of the body, which was thin and dark in color. She also noticed a sheen on the body...like it may have had reptilian-like skin and was wet. The wings were membraned like a bat, but shaped like that of a huge owl. She was amazed at how quickly it glided and that it did not flap its wings or make a sound."

"Shortly after the sighting, the witness heard screeches that sounded like children," he continued. "She was sure this being was watching her and that she reacted like something sinister was about to occur. She went indoors and told her husband. She then found the descriptions of the Chicago

sightings and contacted me."

Interestingly, this area was also home to several UFO sightings.

"It must also be noted that the witness and others in her neighborhood have experienced UFO sightings and flashes of light since December 2017," said Lon.

She helpfully provided the details of her UFO experiences in a follow-up to her winged being report.

> *The date of my first Wilmington UFO encounter is hard to pinpoint exactly due to my shock, but the few people I had told right away brushed me off, so I just let it go and locked it in my mind. I do know that it ranged between December 10th and December 15th, 2017. Time of sighting I do recall, it was about 9:30 p.m. and I froze, locked on this object until it was gone without a trace. The UFO was here for a solid seven to ten minutes actually, so there was no denying what I believe to have seen firsthand. Sadly, I was home by myself, so I had nobody to force outside to see for themselves.*
>
> *Now this one is interesting because like I mentioned in my reply email I am surrounded by heavy wooded area. Lighting in my town is extremely sparse so the sky on clear nights is incredible, and usually carries an extremely eerie vibe to it because to the east and west of my home lie two massive power plants, and a semi-secret helipad and private—I think it's private at least—airport are hidden within a few openings in the wooded area unseen from the main road, known only based off of seeing them ascend from strange areas seeming to be right smack in the middle of the trees.*
>
> *Before I move on to the UFO details, I wanted to make you aware of what I believe may be an important detail about this secretive helipad. My husband worked nights and didn't come home until 11 p.m. usually, so I felt sort of helpless, and even began wondering if I was being irrational of the fear and discomfort I would endure every single night from April through the end of September 2017. Each night around 9:30 or 10 p.m., it varied by the day, I would hear a helicopter flying too low for comfort above my neighborhood in particular. It would fly this low in what sounded to be circles until about 11 p.m., and then seriously come back out at around 1 a.m. and stay out low flying circling around until 2:30 to 3*

a.m.! No exaggeration here. I finally chose to go out and see this copter and sure enough it is all black and appears to be some type of military copter. I have seen it flying low in fields during the day in my previous town in the exact area of my very first UFO sighting in Channahon, Illinois six years ago; so, I found that very strange. Spotlight was on and always seemed to be searching intently for something, and of course that's unnerving. I think it's connected to the encounters around here to an extent.

So back to the actual UFO. I happened to be looking in the general area of the arsenal location, the US Army Ammunition Plant in Wilmington, and in the distance a little further away you can see the orange light from the plant. I was just scanning as usual and suddenly I saw a VERY large triangular craft that was seemingly out of nowhere just hovering over the area. I know for sure it was far enough to be near this arsenal if not directly over it, but I couldn't physically see what it was for sure hovering over. I saw a total of three lights on it, one light on each corner of the triangle. The lights looked to transition from red, blue, and green smoothly. I believe I saw a white beam of light underneath the craft from my position on my steps and it wasn't your textbook abduction beam where its light is moving down to the ground, but I do know I caught a glimpse of white light in that area and it was bright enough to give me a feeling like it was scanning the premises for something or maybe even just taking a look around at my strange town? Either way it sat there in silence. I feel like I was one or two miles away at the most...so I couldn't see as much as I would've liked to, but I think I should've heard noise for how large it was! It then started moving very slowly westbound for about two minutes, maybe three, it hovered for four or five [minutes] easily. It crept and then just flew out of the area in a split second like it just teleported to another dimension.

I was on Cloud 9, and didn't really feel any fear or anything this time. I was a little anxious, but more frozen with excitement and shock. I attempted numerous pictures zoom on, off, filters for more light and I could NOT capture this craft with my phone camera at all, not even a glimpse which I found very creepy. I also want to add that the weather was very obviously cold, but there was not even a tad bit of breeze, and it was uncomfortably quiet that night as if a storm

were about to hit us or something along those lines. Nothing was strange that night from what I recall with the lights in the sky upon the UFO arriving.

This next sighting happened on December 18th, 2017 and it was again to the east of my home, but it was much closer, more visible, and it was more southeast rather than northeast. It actually appeared right by the water tower I can see very clearly from my step, even sitting down.

The time was [approximately] 10:15 p.m. I was actually on the phone with my husband during this one. I was just looking over in that vicinity for no particular reason at all while telling him a story I was excited about, when I started to notice what at first appeared to be those slow-moving Christmas light laser things that people project on their house. I thought it was the house a block over but for some reason couldn't stop looking at the green lights moving around. I started to lose my excitement in my voice while talking because I was feeling weird, almost uncertain I suppose is the best way to describe it. My husband got really concerned because I fell completely silent a few moments later, and I literally could not speak and actually started tearing up and to this day I don't know why I would cry. I don't just tear up in that way. But as I'm frozen, I'm seeing a craft that looks pretty identical to the previous one, but this time it was rising up like it had been on the ground prior to this moment.

Again, very large, like there's no mistaking this for an airplane, and if neighbors were out, I know they would've saw this all happen as well. It rose up at a fairly quick rate, not speed of light type but just a smooth unnaturally advanced rate no doubt. It just kept rising and by this time about 30 maybe 40 seconds have passed and I finally was able to let out an 'OH MY GOD'... and then I felt fear yet excitement and ran in the house and locked my door. I don't know why. I wanted to watch it go, but something was telling me to get inside and I can't figure out why. Probably wise I suppose, but still! As for it seeming to be near the house a block away it definitely was much farther than that once I realized what it was, but still much closer than the previous encounter. This was a quick one. After this happened, I decided to check out MUFON and research sightings out here and I did find one, maybe two, in April of 2017 of almost the

same description UFO!

STRANGE LIGHTS:

I've only noticed the lights for about two weeks, maybe three, tops. I feel like it's closer to two weeks. I've been describing to my family what look at first to be a "new star" but they're just way too large and they glimmer very beautifully to be honest. They glimmer white in the middle always but outlining the white it sparkles bright purple, very bright green, and to me it looks like a small sparkle of red—but red isn't the dominant outlining color at all. I've discovered about four or five of these all more southeast from my sky view, and three of them I know for sure appear in a large triangle and look like a constellation. The problem is I love space and constellations and I own many books on these, but this particular triangle is something I've never ever seen in the sky until very recently. I'll say January 21st was when I noticed [them] first and they appear clearer and more vibrant the later it gets—1 a.m. through 4 a.m. they're incredible! Very unnatural in my opinion and sometimes appear to be slowly moving or bouncing. Hardly noticeable.

The lights seemed to be moving much more this morning, but with my flying humanoid sighting I firmly believe my vision was distorted moments before the creature appeared so I don't want to confirm wholeheartedly that they were in fact moving at a pretty noticeable pace for sure.

"The witness' descriptions are very similar to other sightings throughout the area, reported to MUFON, NUFORC and other forums," said Lon of the anomalous activity.

Wilmington is about 50 miles southwest of Lake Michigan, and in close proximity to wetlands and wilderness preserves.

The nearest airport to Wilmington is the Joliet Regional Airport, approximately 17 miles north of the town. It does feature a helipad used by private charter companies who offer helicopter flights in the area for both business and leisure. There is also an Army Training Area that houses the 470th Transportation Battalion about eight miles north of Wilmington.

Nestled within the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie between Wilmington and Joliet is the decommissioned Joliet Army Ammunition

Plant, which manufactured TNT until the late 1970s. The 23,500 acres of land used by the site was later redeveloped into two industrial parks, a landfill, cemetery, and the aforementioned prairie preserve. The land abuts the Joliet Army Training Area, and together with the training area accounts for 32,000 acres. The army maintained a hunting program in the area for Defense Department workers, which was opened to members of the general public in the early 1990s. Portions of the property were on the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Superfund National Priorities List as recently as 2008, when cleanup activities concluded.

That abandoned US Army ammunition plant reminded me of the old TNT area associated with the Mothman sightings of Point Pleasant, West Virginia. It wasn't a strong correlation, since we didn't receive any other sightings surrounding it, but the synchronicity was there.

A short time after this sighting was reported, a man came forward with an encounter that he said had taken place the night before the one had by our witness in Wilmington.

He emailed his report to Lon.

> *My wife and I moved to Lexington, Illinois in April 2016. During that first summer here, we heard a lot of stories, from residents that we talked to.*
>
> *Back on January 27th, 2018, I wasn't sleeping well because the local coyote pack was getting riled up about something. They were extremely vocal that night. I'm usually a deep sleeper but they woke me up with their incessant yipping, barking, and howling. It sounded like a hunt was on.*
>
> *I got up and decided to use the bathroom, after I did a quick check outside from our windows. While in there I heard what could be...an animal-like screech like the [Rodents of Unusual Size] from the 'Princess Bride' film and a really deep bass "whoo whoo". I thought it was odd. So, I looked out our bathroom window and saw a large shadow pass under a streetlight about 30 feet from our place. It did it a couple times before a creature, like the witness from Wilmington, Illinois described, landed. It made no sound when it flared its wings [or] when it landed in a tree not more than ten feet from our place. A local creek is about 60 to 70 feet away from our place and about the same distance from the tree this being was*

perched in. It walked with a kind of hop. The feet had a splayed three clawed foot, with digits like a sloth. I did not get a good look at the torso or how its arms and grasping digits looked, but the way it landed it looked like it had paws, but I'm not sure. I never got a good look at the head.

I observed it for a few minutes before it made that unnerving screech-hoot sound about four times before it just glided out of the tree towards the creek, in [the] south-southwest direction of the Mackinaw River. The coyotes started up again with their noise but it sounded like they were following it.

I don't think it knew it was being observed. It was more unnerving than the times a Bigfoot made visits to my family's property when I was young, or the night when something literally destroyed two of our mares. I remember enough of that night sometimes to actually have nightmares. But not this thing. It just unnerved me. But one thing I did notice was the stench of blood in the air. I don't know if you've been hunting, but that blood smell when you are field dressing a deer or antelope, that was the smell it left behind. This occurred between 2:30 a.m. and 2:45 a.m. [that morning]. The Wilmington, Illinois witness reported helicopter activity. In my area that ramps up in the late fall early winter, between 11 p.m. and 1:45 a.m. It quits and starts up again at around 2:30 to 2:45 a.m. until around 4 a.m.

One night I was out for a quick walk and heard an odd chopper sound. It sounded like a Blackhawk but really weird, like it had baffling on, but the chop of the blades is unmistakable. That night there was a clear enough sky for a full moon. I saw the silhouette but the tail section was shaped like the rear tail of the cancelled Comanche helicopter. It flew over the cornfields and little forest area nearby and the Mackinaw River for hours, back and forth.

One night in November 2016, I got curious enough to try out my night vision camera. I waited for the chopper to come, [and] right like clockwork it began its route in a five-by-five search pattern. Through the lens I seen two domes under the fuselage, by the cockpit. To my eye not glued to my eyepiece, one was emitting a rather powerful search light but it was concentrated on the river area. It banked north an came close by our place. I [saw] a brightness

emitting from the other dome, I couldn't see it with my naked eye, but it was there on screen. It overloaded the optics on my camera, also the video that I recorded on the flash drive was corrupted and not retrievable. The battery supply burst and the main board was toast.

That same night around 2:30 a.m. or 3 a.m. I was woken up by the sound of diesel engines, but not semi diesel. I looked out on PJ Keller highway, and there was a small convoy of 3 MRAPS, 4 HUMMERS, AND 5 MATVS. A couple hummers had that new .50 caliber mini gun mounted. The rest had either the M2 or M240 mounted. They all looked like they were primer grey colored. They stopped at intervals on either side of the small bridge 50ft away. Troops dismounted from the MRAP AND MATV. They had rifles and strange body armor. They kept the lights on the vehicles on. I took out my field spotter glasses and got a better look...fast entry helmets, balaclavas, four eye night vision sets. Dull finished metallic looking body armor. Vest, arms, legs and curiously neck; they all carried combat sabers, and either FN2000 rifles or rifles that looked like the XM25, 26, [or] 27 prototypes.

A team of three went into the woods off to the right of the road. If you are headed west, by the cemetery. They were gone about ten minutes, when a couple shots rang out and all the troops came out of the woods in a hurry, got in the vehicles, and took off.

The helicopter flyovers stopped until this past August. It's like clockwork...Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. 11 p.m. to 12:45 a.m. and 2:30 a.m. to 4 a.m. Currently one is flying over as I type this [on] January 31st, 2018 at 12:30am.

I prefer to remain anonymous for now. I worked as a civilian independent contractor in the Dakotas for about eight years. Advised in the Golden Coyote exercises in the Black Hills of South Dakota, and the bombing range recovery in the Badlands of South Dakota. I grew up in a military family, all branches, been around military vehicles since I could remember. I couldn't join because of a health problem they detected.

There are three military bases in Bloomington-Normal, approximately 15 miles southwest of Lexington—a National Guard Readiness Training Center, Army National Guard base, and a US Army

Reserve Center—and the Merwin Nature Preserve is roughly six miles northwest of the city. The Mackinaw River flows just a few miles southwest of Lexington, and directly through Merwin Nature Preserve.

There's another series of UFO sightings connected to the Lake Michigan Mothman that I'll mention, these took place near Indiana's Prairie Creek Reservoir.

In early 2019 I corresponded through a series of emails with a man who said he had witnessed "many balls of light" in a rural area of Indiana near Prairie Creek Reservoir. This particular witness has a hearing condition that made him uncomfortable speaking over the telephone. I've since verified his identity through social media.

The Prairie Creek Reservoir, if you'll remember, was the center of a few sightings already in our investigation. It was those sightings, in fact, that led this witness to me.

"I'm about seven miles from [the Prairie Creek Reservoir]," the witness said. "I've seen many balls of light in this area, from Farmland towards Muncie."

"They are intelligent," he continued. "I've seen them react…change color, move, or shut off."

The 51-year-old man stated that his family moved to the area in 1979, and his first sighting of a glowing orb in the area was in the summer of 1981, when he was 12.

"It was a clear summer night sky," he said. "I saw an orange/amber colored ball of light about 20 feet above the trees. It started towards me slowly so I ran in and got my mom, when we came back out it was over our trees. The actual size is hard to say but I'd guess three feet across. It was totally silent, and it moved off to the west out of sight behind the trees."

"Funny thing, probably the summer before, I used to blink one of those old flash lights with the switch and button into the sky," he added.

Since his initial sighting in '81, the witness said he's had a number of sightings of strange glowing orbs in the area, as recently as 2016.

"I'm guessing I've seen them eight or so times where they were either red or orange, and maybe three to four where they were white," he said. "The last time was a few years back [in the summer of 2016]. I was driving east coming home at night, when I spotted an orb that was orange, and it seemed like a second one right next to it was changing back and forth from red to orange and dimming to dark and back. So, I got to my road turning south and

I came to a stop to watch. The car window was down, so I fumbled with my phone to hit record...snap, gone."

The sightings occurred in the area south of and between Parker City and Farmland, near Windsor, and align themselves with a 2,000-year-old Native American burial plot in the shape of an oval that covers an acre of land. To the west of the sightings and the mound, in a nearly straight line, lie the Prairie Creek Reservoir and Mounds State Park.

The line formed by these sightings and the associated landmarks is less than 200 miles north of the 37th Parallel, known as the United States' 'UFO Highway.' Stretching from Santa Cruz, California to the Chesapeake Bay, this area is known for UFO sightings, cattle mutilations, and other anomalous phenomena.

Certain researchers suspect the 37th Parallel runs along a powerful ley line—paths drawn between landmarks that some believe represent a natural energy unrecognized by modern science.

"I know things are found along ley lines," said the witness. "Since the Mothman sighting at Prairie Creek, that makes a rough line from there to here and also Mounds State Park."

As far as what he believes the orbs might be, the witness, who identifies as a Christian, could say only that he does not believe they are any technology known to man.

“I know what the various things at night look like,” he said. "As to what I think is behind the orbs...I believe they are a part of the spiritual or supernatural realm. [They] do things aircraft or pilots could never do.”

I don’t blame anybody for thinking any or all of this is supernatural; it certainly behaves in a way beyond our understanding. Prairie Creek Reservoir wasn’t alone in hosting its own little flap of sightings, either. That’s something we saw over and over again—certain locations or events that would draw our creature like a Mothman to a flame.

CHAPTER NINETEEN
STRANGE ASSOCIATIONS

We've seen the prevalence of synchronicities, like the word gargoyle, creeping around the reports so far, but there were other, occasional coincidences that tied together certain sightings. Coincidences of timing or location that shouldn't be ignored, not because we know them to be significant, but rather because we don't know them not to be, and we've established that it might be foolish to take chances with the truth. Of course, we know that the sightings occurred around Lake Michigan, and that those taking place within Chicago would have had to have been within a few miles of each other; but these associations are more specific even than that, perhaps centered around a specific building, celestial event, or neighborhood—and all within a relatively tight timeframe in relation to each other.

Chicago's Adler Planetarium saw a trio of sightings in 2017 that fit the bill for what we're talking about. The first was on May 19th, and came into MUFON—meaning there was no follow-up to which I was privy. MUFON isn't known for making the results of their investigations public; I was lucky to have received the information I had so far.

The case report read:

Was out at the breakwater with my best friend and her boyfriend. We were waiting for my boyfriend to finish helping his dad tie their boat to the dock after helping bring the boat to the marina for the summer.

We were standing on the shore by some picnic tables waiting on James to meet us there. We were talking when we heard this loud screech, it sounded completely out of this world and after a couple of seconds, we heard another one, only louder and higher-pitched than the first one. We looked around thinking we had heard an animal in distress and if it needed help. That's when we saw this large bat fly into our view. It was black and came from the direction of the bridge that holds up the Lake Shore Drive. It flew low and then shot up into the air as it came over the water. We noticed one of the coast guard helicopters was flying over the water at about the same time, but we're not sure if it saw this thing as it kept on flying toward the Adler Planetarium. This thing flew a large circle and cried out again and almost instantly it was joined by another large bat. These things were big and stood out against the sky. They flew figure eights around each other. It looked like they were dancing in a strange sort of way. It was actually quite beautiful, considering how freaking strange it was.

About that time, my boyfriend walked up on us and scared the living bejezzuz out of us. Both myself and my friend screamed and I think those large bats heard us. Because they screeched back at each other and both flew down toward the water, it looked like they were going to slam into the water and at the last second, they pulled up and flew forward and I'm assuming under the bridge and out of sight. We ran toward the railing, to look down the river and saw nothing else. This entire encounter lasted about one and a half to two minutes. It was scary, only because we didn't know what the hell they were, but it looked like they were interested in each other and not us. We can't be the only other ones to see it as the Riverwalk and the pier were full of people and joggers. Are these things just giant bats or are they gargoyles or just people in those wing-suit thingies?

Without more information, I couldn't know if this was an honest report or someone's creative writing exercise, but it fit the other reports we'd

received and it didn't seem so outlandish that I'd immediately suspect a hoax; nor did anyone ever come forward to claim a hoax or try and use their experience for publicity. That goes for every case, actually. Nothing about this has ever screamed 'hoax' to me, even the very tiny minority of cases that might actually be one.

The other two reports were received by Manuel and Lon, respectively, and much like the first they were never able to be investigated thoroughly. But they corroborate each other, and also like the MUFON report, they don't seem so strange as to be obvious hoaxes.

They both reportedly took place on June 23rd.

The first of that evening:

> *I want to tell you about a sighting that happened on Friday the 23rd of June at about 9:30 p.m. by the Adler Planetarium in Chicago, Illinois. My girlfriend and I are spending the weekend in Chicago and we took a walk around the Adler and Shedd Aquarium so she could try to get some more Pokémon. We were spending our anniversary together downtown and wanted to visit the museum campus. We were at the backside of the Adler Planetarium and had walked along the path toward the food court.*
>
> *We ordered some food and sat down when there was commotion and a bunch of people were shouting and pointing at the sky. We both got up and went to look what was going on and saw a large black bat-like creature headed away from us. When we asked people what they had seen we were told that they had seen a large bat. Everyone described it as a large bat-like creature that also had human-like features.*
>
> *What we saw was flying away from us but supported what everyone else has seen as looking like a large bat. We hung around for about 30 minutes after that looking up at the sky as was everybody else. No one saw or heard anything for the remainder of time that we were there. There was a feeling of uneasiness amongst the people who were there and many shortly departed right before we did.*

And the second:

Good afternoon, I wanted to write in and report a sighting that happened to me and my two friends a few weeks ago along the lake shore of Chicago.
We decided to report this after reading your blog about a similar sighting that happened the same night of ours. The events that I'm writing about happened on Friday June 23rd of 2017 at approximately 10 p.m. I was with a group of friends at the Adler Planetarium just hanging out and having fun down by the concession area.

*We usually hang out at the lake side because it's fun and you get to meet a lot of girls. This particular night we were hanging out at our usual table near the taco stand when we saw what had to be the biggest bat we have ever seen. This bat must have been at least seven feet tall if he was standing up but again, my perception might be skewed because it was dark and this thing was about 20 feet up in the air. All three of us were like 'what the f*** is that!'*

We all saw it about the same time as it flew over and continued toward the area of Soldier Field. It did this for maybe 20 yards or so, then abruptly changed directions and headed toward the lake and flew out over the lake and out of sight. This thing made no noise and was easily seen by myself and at least a few other people. We were so preoccupied with looking at this flying thing that none of us thought about grabbing our phones and taking pictures. Which I regret because I could have posted this on YouTube or Snapchat and made a million bucks.

My friend sent me an e-mail with a link about a similar sighting in the same general area on the same night we had ours. That is why I am writing to report our sighting that we had that night. I am more than willing to talk about the sighting as long as my name is not used and my friends who were with me that night are too.

Thank you for taking my report and not thinking I am crazy because of what we saw. The one thing that does not fit in with the similar sighting that I saw on your site is there was no feeling of dread or despair, but an overwhelming urge to keep looking at the creature. But that could have also been morbid curiosity.

Morbid curiosity is a useful attribute when observing the impossible. These reports always struck me as believable enough narratives, but of course I wish we could have spoken to the witnesses. That wasn’t an issue with the

next set of strange associations: a couple of sighting reports that took place on August 21st, 2017—the date of that year's full solar eclipse.

The first of these was received by Manuel. He received a report from a witness who claimed to have seen a "large black bat" with "humanoid features" on the southern end of Northerly Island in Chicago during the solar eclipse. The sighting occurred that day at approximately 1:15 p.m., which would have been just before the moon reached near totality overhead.

> *I am a little skeptical of reporting what happened, but after reading and researching the sightings that have been happening in Chicago, I am a little more confident that I will not be seen as insane.*
>
> *This happened on August 21st, 2017 at approximately 1:15 p.m. (Central Time) and the location is just off of South Linn White Drive on the southern end of Northerly Island in Chicago, Illinois. I was there with two of my friends and we were there to watch the eclipse that was going to happen over Chicago at about 1:30 p.m. in the afternoon. We showed up approximately an hour and a half early to set up equipment to photograph and to observe the eclipse. We were watching and observing as the moon begin its transit when we heard a very loud scream. This sounded like squeaky truck brakes that squeal when you're pressing hard on them. At first, we thought that's what it was...maybe a CTA bus or big truck with brakes that needed changing or maintenance.*
>
> *We heard it again, this time it lasted about three seconds, whereas the previous sound was brief. I looked up to see a large object flying low over the docks that stick out in to Burnham Harbor from across the water. We were on the east side of the island facing west across the water on the parking lot and can see the docks that line the harbor on the opposite sure. This object looked like a large black bat, but also had humanoid features such as pronounced arms and legs.*
>
> *It was flying along the edge of the docks near the open water and was maybe six or seven feet above the water surface. We saw it fly over most of the docks and then cut a hard left headed toward Soldier Field. We did see it gain altitude as it went over Campus Drive and then toward Soldier Field. The entire sighting lasted about a minute and a half from the time we saw it to the time it cut left and*

went toward the field. All three of us saw it and all three of us were sober and not hallucinating. I am pretty confident that other people saw it because most of the island was filled with people there to see the eclipse. There were also multiple people driving around the museum campus, which is always a very busy spot in the city.

I asked that you please take this sighting very seriously as it was very disturbing to us to see this object. It looked like it was something that should not be messed with, it was scary and looked like it could rip somebody to shreds if it wanted to. This creature had to be about six maybe seven feet tall, having to guess because it was in flight when we saw it. The wings were ginormous and had to be at least six feet wide when we saw them. You could tell that the wings were catching air because there was a wave motion as this creature glided along.

When it banked to the left it flapped its wings at least three or four times to gain altitude over the drive. It did look like it had a small tail from what we could see and that the feet ended in what look like claws or talons. We did not see many features of the face as it was flying and might have been looking away from us, but of course we could not tell because we were in absolute shock. I do not know what else to compare it to as it was larger than most birds I've ever seen and that includes many of the eagles that I grew up with in Alaska. In fact, this thing put many of them to shame in size.

It might not be of any consequence, but right after the sighting there was a decidedly audible hum that was lingering in the area for about 30 minutes. The hum stopped after about a half-hour because we hung around for at least another hour to observe the eclipse and to see if we could possibly get another view of whatever this thing was.

Well, that is my report. I hope to not sound like a complete imbecile but I do know that what we saw was real flesh and blood and was quite scary as Hell. Thank you for your time and attention to this. I sincerely appreciate it.

Manuel was able to interview the witness at length, and was convinced that if nothing else, the report was not a hoax.

"Contact was made with the witnesses and an extensive conversation

was held," said Manuel.

"The witness who reported the sighting and her friend both stated that this creature was solid black and reminded them of the harpies in the movie *Clash of the Titans*," he said. "She did state that it had two arms and two legs and both seem to be tipped with talons. The witness stated that the only lingering effect was a loud hum that was heard by everybody. The witnesses stated that the creature was flapping its wings and that it made a sound that sounded like squeaky brakes. When given the chance to add to the story or embellish it in anyway the witnesses stuck to the original story. It is [my] opinion that these witnesses are being genuine and that they did see something and are not hoaxing any of the story."

When asked why no pictures were taken of the creature, the witnesses explained that they had affixed special lenses to their camera equipment to capture the eclipse. The lenses were far too heavily tinted to be capable of taking a picture of something under normal lighting conditions, and it would have taken too much time to remove them.

Northerly Island is a small island in Lake Michigan connected to the mainland by a narrow strip of land, and, interestingly, is home to the Adler Planetarium.

The second sighting took place near Wicker Park at around 8:20 p.m. that evening, and was reported to Lon.

> *I guess I'm reluctant to speak about it because I know what I saw; it's hard to believe that it's real. I'm still feeling pretty uncomfortable. I can provide my number, if necessary, for you. I am not trying to be difficult, but I am just still shocked by everything.*
>
> *On Monday, August 21st, around 8:20 pm (Central Time) I was on a phone call for about forty minutes. I took the call in my bedroom in my apartment. I am in a third-floor unit, the window in my bedroom overlooks the backyard of the building next to me. To the right of this window, about five to six feet away is the neighbor's roof, it is not close enough for anyone to reach my window unaided. There is no balcony or ladder up to my window as well.*
>
> *About mid-way through the phone call, out the window, which was to my right, with the curtain and drapes pulled aside, out of the corner of my eye I saw movement and noticed a change in light in my room. I saw what looked like a human-shaped shadow from the*

mid-torso up in the window. As soon as I turned to look, the shadow moved unnaturally fast to the left and up out of sight, its movements gave the impression it was taking off to fly. It looked like it used the wall of my building to jump up and away. The shadow was dark gray, when it moved, its body was large enough to block a substantial amount of light, giving me the impression that it was long/tall.

The whole experience had to be under 10 seconds but left me very unnerved. I had run out of my room, trying to explain what I just saw over the phone. About 10 minutes later, I finally felt brave enough to go back to my room and shut the blinds/curtains. I did not see anything unusual at that time. I have not really felt comfortable since.

The next day, the person I had been speaking with showed me your site, as they had done research into what I had seen. I felt pretty uncomfortable reading those other stories, but could see similarities, and was very reluctant to contact you because I having trouble accepting this is real. But I was encouraged to reach out and am hoping to gain more peace of mind.

I'm curious to know if any of these sightings have been violent or if anything bad has happened to the people? Does that thing make repeat visits, or try to get into buildings? Is there anything I should/shouldn't do if it comes back? Is there any correlation in the sightings? Any ideas on what this is, or what its appearance means?

"When I received the initial email from the witness, she was very reluctant to produce any further evidence," Lon said. "Her description of the being was very vague since she only saw an outline of the shadowy figure through her window...but her reaction and fear overwhelmed her. In fact, her friend eventually talked her into making a report."

"She is very torn between what she is supposed to believe and what she actually witnessed. She knows what she experienced and how it made her feel," he added.

Lon attempted to answer her questions as best he could, but the fact is we didn't have much we could tell people, other than that nobody had so far been injured and the creature or creatures didn't appear violent. But that information was cold comfort to the residents of Chicago's Little Village,

who had experienced some of the most terrifying encounters reported.

CHAPTER TWENTY
BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE VILLAGE

For several weeks beginning in September of 2017, Chicago's largely Mexican-American Little Village neighborhood hosted a number of sightings of Lake Michigan's resident winged terror. Manuel took the first report, which made sense, considering he was a liaison of sorts to the Hispanic community. Manuel was active in Little Village, posting fliers and speaking to people on the street. He spoke Spanish and understood the needs of the community, and most of the reports—although certainly not all—that came from such sources went through him.

He even went so far as to create something we could put at the bottom of every published article and report to try and assuage the fears of any undocumented immigrants who might have seen something.

> *This is a plea to any witnesses that have had similar encounters in the Little Village neighborhood. You are assured that your report and your identity will remain anonymous if you so wish. The information gathered here will be purely for research purposes into these sightings and will not be shared with anyone else outside of the UFO Clearinghouse research team and will NOT be shared with any governmental or law enforcement agencies.*
>
> *Esta es una súplica a los testigos que han tenido encuentros similares en el vecindario de Little Village. Usted está seguro de que su informe y su identidad permanecerán anónimas si así lo desea. La información reunida aquí será puramente para propósitos de investigación en estas observaciones y no será compartida con nadie más fuera del equipo de investigación de UFO Clearinghouse y NO será compartida con ninguna agencia gubernamental o de aplicación de la ley.*

The first sighting in Little Village took place on September 9th. According to the witness:

> *On September 9th, 2017 at about 10:30 pm, I was standing outside with some friends, grilling carnitas and drinking beer and listening to some music. We were on South Harding, just past 25th Avenue in La Villita, the Little Village neighborhood of Chicago. We were talking when we heard a very loud sound that sounded like a scream that was loud enough that the entire neighborhood must have heard it.*
>
> *As we looked around to see if someone needed help, one of my friends saw a large black figure with large black wings landing across the street near [a] house. It landed right past the tree and was standing by the gate to [the house's] fence. It was easy to see because the fence is white and the streetlight across the street was lighting up the area. It stood there and it seemed to be doing something with its wings.*
>
> *At one point this thing stretched out its wings and they must have been about nine feet wide but did not look like the wings of a bird. The thing stood there for about 15 seconds more before it must have noticed us and looked right at us with large glowing red eyes and it then shot up into the air and over the houses and was gone. We all saw it and it looked like a black demon with large wings.*

Manuel attempted to contact the witness, but as far as I know, never received a response.

The next sighting was only three days later, on September 12th.

> *I was leaving work and walking down the street toward Millard Avenue in the little village neighborhood of Chicago. I stopped at the store to pick up a couple of items that I needed at home and left turning to my left onto Millard Avenue to walk toward home. As I was walking, I saw something that looked like a large person but had huge black wings and a pair of glowing orange eyes. At first, I thought it might be a large owl but as I got closer, I realized that this person was at least seven feet tall. I'm five foot four and this thing*

towered over me. It stood there and looked right at me for about 10 seconds and made a sort of chirping sound as I approached it.

My first thought was that this was the devil and [then I] started praying as I walked. And I kept walking because I felt that if I stopped, I was going to be paralyzed with fear. As I got to about 20 feet from where it was standing it let out a very loud screech that sounded as it was trying to warn me before leaping up into the air and taking off in the direction of West 25th Street. I watched it disappear into the night and continued saying my prayers as I walked toward home. When I got home, I was hysterical and crying and my family came rushing to my side when they saw me crying uncontrollably. I related the story to everybody in the living room and my grandmother said that it was either the devil or a lechuza. She stated that either way I was very lucky to make it home and that saying my prayers had protected me from this thing. I slept at night with the window locked, curtains drawn and a light from my desk on. Even though I slept with the lights on I still dreamed of this horrific thing and that it was coming to get me. I pray to God that I never see this thing again and now I know that my prayers protected me from whatever this thing was.

Manuel spoke to the witness that same evening.

"The witness reiterated the story as reported. No embellishing of the story was given when presented the opportunity and when asked a series of questions about the sighting, she gave no variation of the sighting reported. The witness stated that she was still visibly upset by this sighting, even 48 hours removed. After speaking with the witness and going over the sighting with her in detail, it is the investigator's opinion that the witness did see something that evening and that her report is credible," he said in his report.

"The witness also stated that she has heard stories from the surrounding neighborhood that other witnesses have seen what they describe as 'Un Diablo Negro' or a 'Black Devil' in the neighborhoods within Little Village," Manuel continued. "When asked if she could point me in the direction of any other witnesses, she was very hesitant to divulge any information. After some time speaking with her and assuring her that the witnesses could remain anonymous, she agreed to refer any witnesses she knew to [UFO Clearinghouse]."

And then several days after that, on Saturday, September 16, 2017 at about 10 p.m., the following sighting reportedly occurred.

> *We were walking back from visiting a family member's house when we saw what looked like a large bat fly over our heads and continue down the street. As we continued walking, we saw that the bat had landed on the ground across the street from the tiendita (convenience store) on the corner of Ridgeway and 24th. We also noticed that it was looking right at us as we walked toward the intersection, it was very easy to see it with the lights. As we got nearer, we saw someone come out of the tiendita across the street and this thing turned its attention toward the person, who saw it and screamed and took off running.*
>
> *It was then that it turned back to us and opened its wings and took a step toward us. My sister and I did not stand around to see what was going to happen next and took off running back toward 23rd street. The family member's house where we had come from was near the viaduct where the train goes over. This large bat let out a shriek and took off into the air, because it flew just over our heads and then landed about 15 feet in front of us on the road. It looked right at us and shrieked at us, at that time a car turned onto Ridgeway from behind us on 24th street. This bat took off from the road and took off, leaving us cowering on the sidewalk. We have never been so scared in all of our lives and we hate to think what would have happened to us if that car had not turned the corner when it did. The car continued its way, not even stopping and we headed back to our family member's house and her son gave us a ride home.*

Manuel was able to contact these witnesses by telephone.

"Both siblings spoke of the events leading up to the encounter, neither strayed from the story as told in the sighting report. Even after being questioned...separately they both told the exact same story with no embellishment. They have both agreed to meet with a field investigator to retrace the steps at the sight of the encounter, it will be scheduled at a future date and any information will be posted on the website," he said.

"It is this investigator's opinion that the sighting appears genuine, but further investigation is warranted since the nature of the sighting is

completely different than any of the others," added Manuel.

I don't know that it was so different from the others, honestly. We'd heard of these winged beings shrieking before, and beyond that the description seemed consistent with what we'd received from other witnesses. Manuel had planned to conduct an onsite investigation, but I don't believe a visit to the location turned up anything else of interest, or if it did, I didn't hear about it.

The next sighting was on September 24th.

According to the report submitted to Manuel:

> *We were walking home from Sunday evening mass and were walking our usual route up Drake Avenue toward our house. As we walked, we noticed what looked like a very tall man dressed in black standing out in the middle of the road underneath a street light. We didn't pay it much attention as we assumed that it was just a regular person in the road and wearing black clothing. The man then stretched his arms up above his head and it looked like he was stretching and suddenly, a pair of very large wings stretched out from behind him; they must have been over 10 feet wide and were solid black. Even though this man was standing under a street light, there was not a lot of detail to this man.*
>
> *As we walked closer, we noticed that the man turned and walked, more like hopped toward the sidewalk ahead of us. It was then that it turned toward us and we saw that it had a pair of glowing red eyes. My mother uttered the words "Madre de Dios" and crossed herself and then said to us that it looked like a duende, which is the Spanish word for a goblin. We stopped and I stood in front of my mom trying to shield her.*
>
> *The man then made a loud screech and then it opened its wings and shot up in the air. You could hear the sound of wings flapping as it rose up in the air and passed over us and out of sight as it continued flying down the street and out of sight. My mother was visibly shaking and was praying when I turned back to her. We reassured her that it was over and the thing was gone, I asked my brother to help me walk her the rest of the way home.*
>
> *When we got home, my brother said that my mother told him that she could feel a strong sense of evil coming from this thing. She*

was certain that this thing was sent to do harm to someone and that she felt sorry for whoever it was sent after. I am certain that whatever it was that we saw, it was not a bird but something from outside of this world.

Manuel was able to speak to both of the brothers involved in the encounter, one of whom initially made the report. The mother, who had felt a "strong sense of evil" coming from the creature, was unwilling to speak to him, but did provide additional details of the sighting through her son.

"I talked to the eldest brother, the one making the report and he stated that he had heard from others about the sightings and that he could report it to [UFO Clearinghouse] from a flyer posted at a local grocery store," Manuel said. "I spoke on two occasions with him and then once to the younger brother regarding their sighting. The third witness was unwilling to speak with me in regard to her sighting but did provide details via her eldest son. Both siblings were able recall their sightings in detail and both gave similar details when interviewed separately. Neither of the witnesses embellished their sighting and neither witness contradicted the other's testimony."

"When I asked if either one would accompany me back to the spot of the sighting, I was told that they would accompany me, but would only do it during the daylight hours and would absolutely not do it after dark," he continued. "It was apparent that both witnesses were very shaken up and that they believe that what they saw was real. It is [my] opinion that this sighting is valid and the witnesses are credible and this sighting warrants further investigation. The proximity of the sighting to other reported sightings also warrants further investigation and follow up with all witnesses."

Only two days later, on September 26th, another terrifying encounter took place in Little Village; this one was reported to Lon.

The initial report read:

Hello, I just found your email and want to tell you what I saw. Please do not contact me. I live near the elementary school on Central Park Avenue. Last night (Tuesday, September 26th, 2017) at 9:15 p.m. I heard the neighbor dog barking like crazy. I looked out the back door and turned on the porch light. We saw this monster bat spread open its wings in my back yard. My son saw it too. It took off into the air in just a second or two. We both fell to our knees. I am so

scared by this. My son drew this sketch. The red eyes were very bright and it looked at us.

"It took me awhile to figure out that this sighting was in Little Village, and very close to the previous sightings," Lon said. "I believe the school the witness is referring to is the Castellanos Elementary School located at 2524 South Central Park Avenue."

Knowing that, Lon felt especially motivated to speak with these witnesses, and contacted them in the hope that they would agree to be interviewed by either himself or Manuel. His persistence paid off, and he received another email—this time with a phone number.

Lon called the number and spoke to the son mentioned in the original report, but his mother was reluctant to speak of her experience. Whatever was flying around Little Village, it was scaring people to the point that they didn't want to talk about it.

"The woman and her adult son witnessed the winged being and are sticking to most of the original story...though there were a few revisions," Lon said. "I asked how long they observed the being, and I was told by the son that he watched it for at least 10 seconds. His mother had an immediate reaction to it and dropped to the floor. He continued to watch the being until it flapped its wings and ascended quickly. He said that the wings were about 15 feet wide when fully open, judging by the width of the yard. He thought the height was about six to seven feet. He never heard a sound, even when it flapped the wings. It was standing in front of the garage at the end of the yard, so there was a good backdrop for him to see detail. The son actually wrote the original email...seems his mother doesn't use a computer."

"I asked if he would talk to an investigator...he said possibly, but they would not be able to meet at his mother's house," he continued. "He told me that he was hesitant to make a report, but his girlfriend and her brother had heard of the sightings and gave him my information. We had a pleasant conversation...but he is concerned for his mother. She is not reacting well to the sighting."

The witness' girlfriend was something of an artist, and sketched the creature[AC5] based on his description. He said the drawing was very close to what he had witnessed. Assuming that's true, and I have no reason not to believe them, then what they saw was certainly anomalous, to say the least.

That sighting marked the end of the sightings in September, but not

the monster's interest in Little Village. A month later, on October 27th, Manuel received a report of a sighting in Piotrowski Park, on the neighborhood's southwest border.

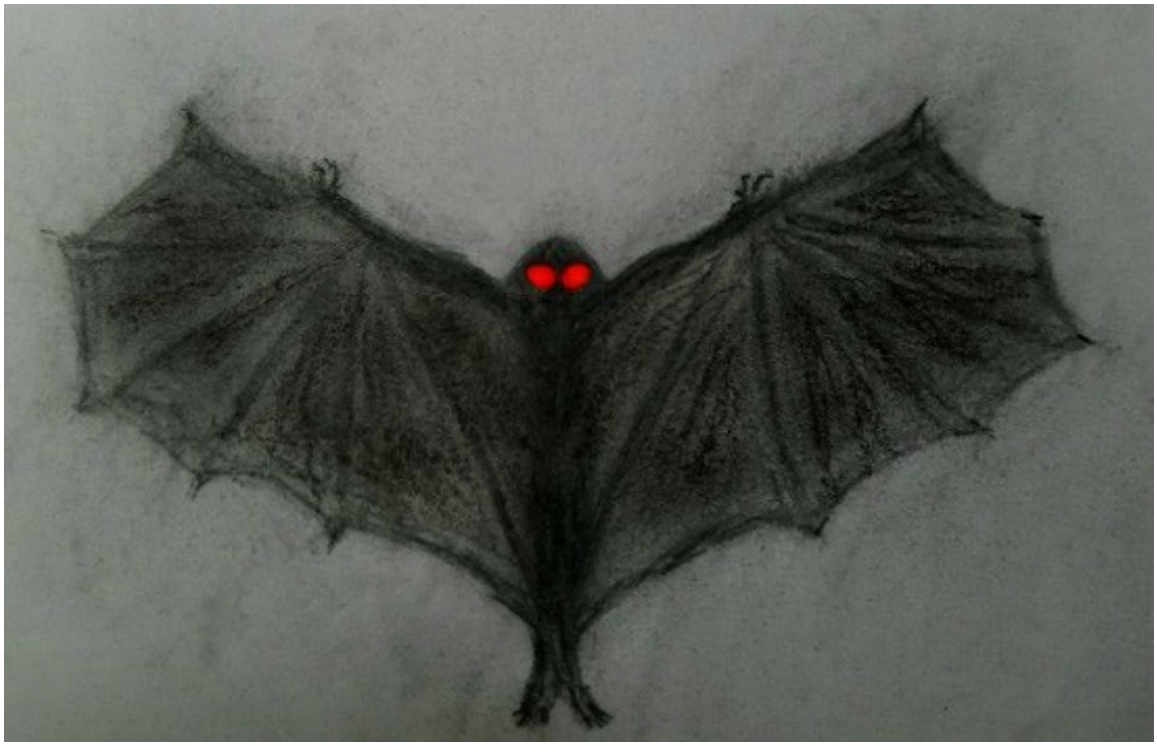
We were parked in the parking lot of the community center at Piotrowski Park at about 10:30 p.m. We had just both gotten off work at 10:00 p.m. and decided to meet up at the park and spend some time together before going home. We were in my boyfriend's car talking and listening to music when it felt like something hit his car from behind. There was no one else in the parking lot except his car and mine but it felt like a car had hit him. My boyfriend stopped what he was doing and was going to step out to see what hit his car when something large dropped onto the hood of his car. We looked, and both screamed at the same time as we saw a pair of bright orange eyes peering back at us through the windshield. The thing that landed was solid black and was about the size of a man and had what looked like wings that were spread out wide. It looked right at us and then appeared to swipe the windshield with its hand, the fingers were long, much longer than a normal person and ended in what looked like claws.

It looked like it was trying to get into the car and at us, we were both screaming as it swiped the windshield three to four times. My boyfriend then grabbed a flashlight that he had in the car and shined it through the windshield at this thing. It then shrieked out loud, it sounded like what the screams of multiple people in a small room would sound like. Then It flexed its wings and took off straight up and was gone from our sight. We heard it shriek out at least twice about 1 minute apart as it probably circled the area after which we heard silence. We were both scared beyond belief and I was hysterical and crying, afraid to get out as I thought it might swoop down and attack me if I did.

We spent 15 minutes in my boyfriend's car and eventually calmed down enough to attempt to get out of the car and sprint to my car. My boyfriend got out and escorted me to my car, once I was inside and the doors locked, he sprinted back to his car and also got ready to leave. I have never been so scared in my entire life and when I got home, I had to go into the bathroom and compose myself before facing my family. We talked about the incident at work on Monday and that is when I decided to come home and look up information if anyone else had seen this thing. I was shocked to see so many sightings had occurred and decided to report mine.

I am willing to talk to someone about this incident, but my boyfriend is refusing to as this would jeopardize both our jobs and our families. I am willing to talk and show you the place where it [appeared].

The witnesses proved to be very reluctant to come forward, despite Manuel's attempts to meet them and inspect the car for damage, and to my knowledge nothing ever materialized after the initial report. Other than the one sketch, we didn't have much we could actually hold onto in the way of evidence, but that didn't invalidate the Little Village sightings. They were indicative of the baffling nature of the phenomenon—a winged terror seemingly capable of appearing and disappearing at will in the heart of a major metropolitan area—but they were also of value in that they helped establish a sort of profile for the sightings. What we had were often what I called 'interrupted journeys'; people out at night just going about their business who very suddenly, unexpectedly, and with great impact encountered the impossible.



The sketch provided by the witness near Castellanos Elementary. *(top; Phantoms & Monsters)*
An illustration of the Lake Michigan Mothman based on witness accounts. *(Donie Odulio)*

CHAPTER TWENTY ONE
A PERFECTLY PLEASANT EVENING RUINED BY MOTHMAN

Manuel received the following report a little over a day after it happened.

> *I was walking with my boyfriend in Lincoln Park around 10 p.m. tonight on Saturday, June 3rd and saw a huge bat, or what I could only describe as a bat, glide past. It was huge and long. I can't explain what it was but it was not normal. It was pitch black and had no feathers. I thought it was an eagle or a bat, but it was definitely*

bigger than both of those. Its wings were skin-like and it made no sound. I called my boyfriend to see it but by the time he looked he only saw the tail end of it. We both felt very uneasy and more uneasy after googling and coming across similar reports. I'm not sure what to make of it but it was not normal. The wings were longer than my boyfriend's arms and he's six feet.

At the time a team of investigators from UFO Clearinghouse said they planned to follow up with the witnesses, but as far as I know it never happened. Perhaps we would have received more valuable details if they had, or perhaps not. But I wasn't comfortable trying to make a determination based off of what was present in that report.

Luckily, a second couple saw something eerily similar at the same time, only a half-mile away.

Lon received a telephone call at midnight from a couple who said they had encountered a 'large man with bat wings' in the 400 block of North Arlington Place, between North Clark Street and North Lakeview Avenue, in the Lincoln Park community of Chicago.

"A couple called me from the location after the encounter," he said. "It took them about an hour to search Google for similar sightings and to find my telephone number. The sighting was on Saturday 6/3/2017 at approximately 10 p.m. CT local time."

"Both witnesses talked to me. They were both shook up and assured me that neither of them drink alcohol or take drugs. Both are professionals and business owners in the Chicago area," Lon explained. "They had just finished a late dinner at a local restaurant and noticed the flying anomaly as they were walking on the 400 block of North Arlington Place. The street lights illuminated the figure enough to startle them, so it could not have been very high above the street."

"They both described it as a seven-to-eight-foot-tall solid black humanoid with wide membranous wings, that resembled those of a huge bat," he said. "The wing span was at least 12 feet. The head was prominent, and thinner than a human head. The back end of the body tampered to a point. No legs were noticed, but could have been tucked up under the body. The figure was gliding quickly along the length of the street heading east, then suddenly ascended into the night sky. Neither heard any sound. Both witnesses told me that they felt a sense of foreboding and were still terrified almost an hour

after the encounter."

That's certainly a little more interesting than the one received by Manuel, and together the two reports were of even more interest still. If what Lon's witnesses described was accurate, then that was no bird, which leaves open the possibility that the couple who contacted Manuel had also witnessed the impossible.

People innocently going about their business at night, only to be startled by a huge flying creature was something of a fixture in the investigation.

The following two reports were submitted to Manuel.

> *I was leaving work at about 8:45 p.m. [July 27th, 2017] on Thursday night in The Loop. As I walked the two blocks to the nearest train station to go home, I saw a large bat-like creature that was perched on top of one the streetlight poles across the street from the Harold Washington Library. This creature stood about seven feet tall and was sitting there motionless.*
> *This creature had a pair of glowing red eyes that appear to be fixated on something across the street. It stood there for about six seconds [and] that's when I saw a flash from a group of kids on the sidewalk as someone was taking a picture of this thing. It then spread open a large pair of wings flapped them a couple of times and took off into the air. The girls from that group of kids screamed and they all took off running.*
>
> *I saw as it shot up and over the library and was gone in the matter of about two seconds. I was very shaken up by what I saw and talked to my pastor about it at church on Saturday. It was he who pointed me in the direction of this site where I can make this report, thank you.*

That photograph never surfaced, although this next one did include a sketch.[AC6]

> *Hi, I saw that you were keeping a timeline of "batman" sightings in Chicago. My friend and I just saw something in Albany Park/Lincoln Square, about half an hour ago [July 29th, 2017; 10:30 p.m.], and I'm not sure who to report it to.*

It was a huge black shape that appeared to be gliding high over the Wilson/Kimball area. We viewed it from my balcony about half a mile north of there. We observed it gliding for about two minutes before it was lost in the clouds, headed south. It looked somewhat like a bat and that's what I thought it was at first, but it was just too big! It was hard to tell exactly how big from that distance, but I would guess about an eight-foot wingspan.

We're pretty spooked by it. Let me know if you have any advice about who we should report this to.

Lon spoke to two witness on April 10th, 2018 who said they saw an "owl man" in the Woodlawn neighborhood of Chicago.

“On Tuesday April 10th, 2018 at 8:30 p.m. a woman and her partner were in the area of South University Avenue and East 72nd Street (Woodlawn community) picking up their daughter, when they both noticed a huge dark winged being gliding overhead. The being was at an approximate altitude of 50 feet or so, swiftly gliding north towards downtown Chicago. They watched the being until it was shielded by trees. The area was well-lit by the street lights. It made no sound and never flapped its wings,” said Lon.

The witnesses described the creature as an "owl man," said Lon, and they insisted it could be no normal bird or flying device.

“Both witnesses agreed and described the being as an 'owl man' with a wingspan of 'at least' 15 feet and a thin human-like body of approximately six feet in length,” Lon said. “They could not see a head, but did notice appendages underneath. The wings were shaped like an owl, which the witnesses have seen in the neighborhood. They emphatically stated that this 'was not' an owl or any other bird. They are well aware of blue herons and sandhill cranes since they are both lifelong residents of the Chicago metro area, and that there is 'no chance' that this was one of those creatures.”

"I asked the witnesses if they thought if it could have been a flying device or drone. Both confidently stated that this was a living being and not mechanical," he added.

Like so many others, they found Lon through Google, he said, and appeared genuinely nervous and confused.

"As soon as they arrived home (which was less than a block from where they observed the being) they Googled 'human bird in Chicago' and my contact information was the result of the search," Lon said. "Both seem

nervous and confused by what they saw and asked what I knew about this winged being. Neither witness was aware of the previous sightings in the Chicago metro area since early 2017."

Eight months before, just a mile north along the shore of Lake Michigan, a visiting couple had reportedly seen a flying anomaly with glowing red eyes.

"I received a brief email today (Thursday, August 10th, 2017, 3:45 p.m. ET) from a witness in Chicago. I was asked to call them for further information...so I responded with a telephone call at 4:10 p.m. ET," said Lon.

According to Lon, “The witness, 'AG' and her husband, who live in the Washington, DC suburbs, [were] in Chicago visiting her parents, who live at 1400 Lake Shore Drive. She was born and raised in Chicago and went to college there also.”

“Last night, Wednesday, August 9th, 2017 at approximately 9:20 p.m. CT, the witness and her husband were returning to her parents’ residence after taking a brief walk [south] along North Lake Shore Drive. As they approached East Schiller Street, they noticed something large and dark flying towards them from their left—the direction of Lake Michigan. Both witnesses were startled, as the flying anomaly crossed ahead of them at an altitude of 20 or so feet. They watched the anomaly sweep upwards, over the trees in front of 1400 North Lake Shore Drive, then stop in mid-air after it reached a height just a few stories from the top of the building. It hovered with a large pair of wings for approximately five seconds, as it seemed to be focus on the windows in front of it. It then bent backwards and fell into a dive down towards the trees,” he said.

“The witnesses hurriedly walked in the direction of the intersection and then turned right onto East Schiller Street, quickly walking towards the entrance to the condominium building. Then suddenly, the large winged being slowing descended in front of them, no more than 25 feet away. It hovered about five feet above the sidewalk, with its wings spread open, as it peered at the couple with large bright red eyes that slowly altered back and forth in intensity. Several people on the other side of the street, including a delivery van driver, reacted with screams and frightened yelps. The winged being hovered for 10 seconds, then quickly pulled the wings into its body and shot up quickly into the night sky. There was no sound, other than a rush of air as the being flew upwards,” continued Lon.

“The witness 'AG' described the winged being as 'human-like' with a small head that narrowed at the top. It had legs like a human with long feet

that tapered. Neither witness noticed any arms. The body was five to six feet in height and it had wide wings that resembled the top wings of a butterfly, attached along the body. The illumination from the building entrance could be seen through the wings, so it looked to be made of a skin or membrane. The wingspan was easily 10 [or more] feet. The legs pulsated as it hovered in the air. The overall color was very dark...like a deep bluish-green. The skin on the body may have been moist, since it was shiny. The eyes were large compared to the head size...slightly slanted, and alternated back and forth in brightness. It made no noise, other than a slight humming from the pulsating legs. Both witnesses stated that they felt 'a vibration that emanated from the being,'" he explained.

"The witness did see at least one camera flash come from across the street," Lon added. "Neither witness was able to retrieve their phones...the fear and shock was too profound during the encounter. AG stated that she literally 'fell to her knees' after the incident, and that her husband had to assist her the rest of the way. Neither witness has slept more than an hour or two since their encounter 18 hours previous."

This being, whatever it was, had once again driven someone to the ground in terror. That fear, the numbing horror that so many of the sightings bring, it's pervasive; it stays with people—and in almost no other case is it as well-described as in that which was reported to Manuel in April of 2017.

The following eyewitness report was published by UFO Clearinghouse on April 10th, 2017:

> *I'm writing this out after taking a day or two to really, really think out if I wanted to report this and tell others of what I saw the other night in Oz park here in Chicago. I finally decided that writing this out and submitting it would be therapeutic to me and might hopefully help identify what it was that I saw and maybe help someone else avoid the same thing.*
>
> *I live in the Lincoln Park neighborhood in the city of Chicago and live about one and a half blocks from Oz Park. When the weather is nice, I usually go outdoors and to the park to jog and walk my dog. The night of April 7th was no different, it was mild and the cold weather had finally subsided so I decided to give the treadmill a break and go outside to jog and let the dog get some fresh air. As I came to the corner of Burling St and Webster Avenue where I cross*

the street to the park, my dog began acting very peculiar and acted like she didn't want to go to the park. This is very strange as usually my dog goes absolutely nuts when we go to the park and has the time of her life running and sniffing. On this particular evening, she acted like she was mortified to cross the street and enter the park.

As we crossed the street and came up to the area where the basketball courts are located and the start of the trail that goes around and through the park, my dog was practically being dragged as she resisted wanting to continue. After much effort, I finally got her to finally cooperate and begin the walk. I started walking East toward the Oz Garden, a route that is my usual when I come here to walk or to jog. As we walked toward the garden, I noticed that many of the birds you usually hear in the park were all but silent and that the only noise you could here was the usual city noise from the surrounding neighborhood.

As we rounded the sidewalk to head south with the garden to my left, I heard what could only be described as the flapping of wings. I really didn't give it a second thought as I assumed it would be some passing Canadian Geese that I've seen in the park recently. As we came toward the clearing where you would find the baseball fields, something caught my eye and what I saw still scares the crap out of me. I saw a large man, probably seven feet or taller standing on the ground. It was solid black, but what really stood out were the large, and I do mean large pair of wings that were folded behind him. These wings stood taller than the man by at least a foot and a half and jutted out of his back. I could not see its face as it had its face turned away from me and probably didn't notice me at first. It finally turned and noticed me and I saw the bright, ruby red eyes that appeared to glow from within. It was at this time that it turned and faced me and I got to see what it really looked like.

It was about seven feet tall, and instead of clothes, it looked like a giant half man, half bird kind of thing. It reminded me of the character Birdperson from the show Rick and Morty, only a LOT scarier! This thing stared at me for about 15 seconds, which felt like an eternity and then in a loud whoosh it unfurled its wings and screeched really loud, and jetted into the air. These wings looked almost bat-like and were at least 10 feet across from tip to tip. I felt

like this thing could see right through me, read me, it knew what I was thinking, like it could stare right into my very soul. It was the most terrified I have ever been in my life. It rose into the air like a bullet and I heard it screech once more before losing it from my view as it rose above the trees and possibly the buildings. It was at that time that I realized that I had yet to scream or react in any way. I was just numb, numb from my head to my toes. I finished my walk early and walked home, all the while trying to see if I could see it again once I got to the street.

It was the scariest thing I have ever experienced and it led me to look up giant mutant birds online and eventually came to sights talking about similar sightings that other people have had and eventually to where I could post and report my own sighting. I don't want you to think that I am crazy, I'm just a normal person who had a weird and strange experience. I do not abuse drugs or take any kind of hallucinogens or anything like that. I know what I saw was real and that I saw it in Oz Park, in Chicago, Illinois. I don't want publicity at all, I just want to tell my story and to warn others who might jog or walk the trails of Oz Park. I never felt like I was in any real kind of danger, if I did not provoke it. But I felt that this creature could have ripped me limb from limb if I had approached it or threatened it in any way. Maybe it was passing through like the Canadian Geese do when they are migrating. Either way, I hope that we never get to meet face to face again.

Manuel was able to contact the witness, who wished to remain anonymous.

According to Manuel, the witness "is an educated professional who has lived in the Oz Park neighborhood for over 10 years and after some basic questions appeared to be a credible witness with no need to propagate a hoax."

When asked why no picture was taken of the creature, "the witness stated that she was frozen in place and that the thought of grabbing her phone, which was in her pocket, never occurred to her...She feels that part of the fear she felt was due to some unknown influence the creature might have had over her, a defense mechanism she hypothesized."

Eerily similar was this report from August of 2017, received by Lon.

The witness called him in the early morning of August 3rd, just hours after the sighting occurred.

Following their conversation, Lon said that “The encounter took place in the playground area of Indian Boundary Park in Bolingbrook, Illinois, a southwest suburb of Chicago. The witness stated that she has a normal routine of walking in the park at night. On Wednesday, August 2nd, 2017 at approximately 10:30 p.m. CT, the witness—who wishes to remain anonymous in the report since she resides in a tight-knit community—was in the playground area of the park when she came upon a seven-to-eight-foot-tall being standing in the middle of a pathway. The witness initially thought that this was 'two people embracing' but was surprised at the height. She also noticed a sucking and slobbering sound coming from the being. She felt like she was being 'drawn' to the being...as well as feeling a sense of foreboding.”

“The witness grabbed her cellphone in order to capture a photo, but was shocked when the being slowly turned towards her,” he said. “Overcome with fear, she quickly realized that this was not two people embracing, but a single tall, dark humanoid. The witness got the feeling that it somehow knew that she was going to take a photo and then reacted. She mentioned that she felt like she was being 'lured' towards the humanoid. The being had exceptionally broad shoulders and looked like it was wearing a thick black unknown material. The head was human-like but quite small in size. She was within 15 feet of the being, but never noticed any eyes or facial features. There was enough moonlight available, so she was able to get an excellent look at this being.”

Lon explained that the witness “immediately took another pathway in order to get away from the being, but soon started to experience intense weakness and fear. She had to sit and gather herself...while keeping an eye out for the being. Eventually she got to her feet and quickly followed another path home.”

“When the witness arrived at her home, she relayed the experience to her son, who recommended that they drive back to the park and see if the being was still there. As they approached, they drove around the location. Then the son noticed a large dark shadow emerge from and stood up at a nearby bush. He stated that it 'peered' at him, though he didn't see any eyes or face. He just knew that it was watching him and that he was overcome by intense apprehension. They quickly headed home,” he said.

“When they arrived at home, they were both very scared and

upset...not knowing what to do," Lon explained. "Should they report the incident to the local authorities or remain quiet? Eventually, they went online and found my contact information. When I talked to the witness, she was shocked at the number of sightings in the Chicago metro area. She had no knowledge of any of the previous incidents. It was quite obvious that she was still very scared and was afraid that the being may know where she lives."

"I asked the witness to keep in contact with me if she has another experience, hears of any other sightings or remembers further details," he added.

Lon went on to say that "The park is a large complex nearby a school and subdivision along Springwood Lane. I asked the witness if the covering may have been membrane-like wings wrapped around the body...which she acknowledged in the affirmative. I have talked to several witnesses by telephone during this wave of sightings, but it was obvious that this witness was literally terrified by what she had experienced."

Several days later, two women leaving Lollapalooza said they saw a "giant bat" flying in Grant Park.

Manuel received this report shortly after the sighting.

> *My friend and I were attending Lollapalooza last Sunday, August 6th, 2017 at Grant Park in Chicago, Illinois—located in Chicago's central business district. As the concert ended and we were walking back to the hotel, we saw what looked like a giant bat flying just above the tree tops in the park. As we walked into a clearing, we saw that this thing had landed and was looking directly at us with a pair of glowing red eyes. These eyes were brightly lit and a brilliant red. We both screamed which attracted the attention of a few people who ran up to us and saw this thing. This thing then spread its wings open and shot straight up into the air.*
>
> *It flew above the tree tops and then disappeared into the darkness of the night. The strange thing, aside from this creature, was that the park was absolutely silent after it left. No birds were heard, not even the sound of the city around us...just a bunch of scared people trying to make heads or tails of what the hell we saw.*
>
> *The creature was approximately seven feet tall and was completely black. It had a pair of red eyes that glowed and when its wings spread open it must have been at least 10 feet across. These*

wings did not look like they had feathers but instead looked like what a giant bat's wings would look like. It made no sound other than the sound of flapping once he got airborne and it was gone within four to five seconds.

"The witness states that they left the Lollapalooza grounds at approximately 9:30 p.m. They were one of the last attendees to leave, in order to allow the crowds to thin out and make it easier to travel to the hotel," said Manuel after conducting a follow-up interview.

"The witness and her girlfriend both reported that they were both talking and walking when they noticed something fly overhead," he continued. "At first they paid no attention and assumed it was just a large bird. They continued walking for approximately 150 yards when they notice the creature in a clearing in the park. They stated that the creature looked like it was hunched over something when it noticed them and they were able to look at it face to face. They both agreed that it was about five seconds later that a group of people came up from behind and also saw the creature. They were all pointing and some were even shouting at it. It was at this point that the creature unfolded its wings and took off into the air. Both witnesses described the wings as membrane, just like a bat's wings, and about seven to ten feet wide from tip to tip. They say the creature shot up into the air with minimal effort and was gone within seconds."

"When asked specific questions meant to misdirect, both witnesses stuck with the story they submitted. Neither tried to embellish and both specifically stated that they were sober and fully aware of their surroundings. Neither witness reported any adverse effects following the encounter or the subsequent days after," added Manuel.

That August ended with a report received by Lon following an appearance on the Beyond the Darkness podcast. He was on the popular paranormal podcast to discuss the recent flying humanoid sightings in Chicago, and afterward was contacted by a man claiming to be a retired police officer. The man said he was in Forest Park on Sunday, August 27th, 2017, when he saw a "dark gargoyle."

"[The witness] stated that he is a retired police officer—a 25-year veteran—and resides in Kalamazoo, Michigan. He was visiting his mother on her birthday, Sunday, August 27, 2017 at her residence in the Forest Park suburb of Chicago, Illinois," he explained.

Lon said that the witness had “at approximately 8:45 p.m. CT local time…volunteered to walk his mother's dog before he left to drive home to Michigan. His mother's caregiver, a neighbor, usually did this task. As he walked west on Jackson Boulevard, in front of the Howard Mohr Community Center, he noticed something crouched on the roof, behind the facade of the building to his west, which was next door to the community center. Since it was dusk and there was a bit of light coming from a street light, the witness was able to observe whatever this was.”

At this point, said Lon, “He had stopped walking and was 50 or so feet away from what he described as a 'dark gargoyle' that was looking directly at him. The dog, a standard poodle, was restless and began to bark. The being stood up and made a growling-like sound...very guttural and menacing. The witness noticed that that eyes were small but had a distinct reddish glow. The being had the body shape similar to that of a human man, but gaunt and dark gray in color. There were large wings folded outward from its back...very similar to the typical image of a gargoyle, but much larger. The height was around six feet or so. The head was somewhat conical and small compared to the rest of the body. It had long arms with claw-like hands, that swayed back and forth in front of the being.”

“After watching for about 10 to 15 seconds (he also had to maintain control of the dog, which was barking and pulling on the lead), the wings 'snapped' from the back of the being and spread out to a full span. The wings were very distinct with a dark membrane covering. He estimated the span was about 15 feet and extended high above the being,” he said. “Then the being's wings dropped to its side and it quickly propelled itself into the air, heading south in the direction of the Metro station. It made no sound as it ascended.”

“The witness quickly returned to his mother's house, but he did not want to upset her by repeating his encounter,” Lon explained. “He told me that he had not heard of the sightings in Chicago and that he questioned what he has seen, until he heard the radio show. This is the first time he has talked about the incident.”

"The witness was very convincing," Lon said of the man’s testimony. "And seemed relieved that he was able to safely recount his encounter. I believe that he may have been a member of the local police, Forest Park or Chicago, at some point in his career...but he never acknowledged it. He asked me not to use his name...not even his initials."

This next report I might not have included had it come in to us at the Singular Fortean Society; normally I discard cases from witnesses who admit insobriety. That may seem unfair, and if you said that I'd agree with you, but the fact is it's difficult enough to get people to take these stories seriously—and it does us no favors in service of attacking the societal stigma attached to the paranormal to include reports so easily written off. But this report didn't come to me, it came to Manuel, and I suppose, if nothing else, we can admire this witness' forthright accounting of their experience.

> *I was walking toward my apartment with my best friend and another girlfriend after getting off Green line train. It was about 11 p.m. on Friday, February 2nd, 2018. We were right next to the parking lot next to the YMCA when we saw something land across the street from us. The streetlight gave it some illumination along with the moonlight and it looked like a tall man, but it had a very large black pair of wings. Now I know we had been drinking a bit, but I was sober enough to know reality from hallucination. Besides seeing this thing was enough to scare anyone sober in a heartbeat. Seeing a man with wings was already freaky enough, but when we saw what could only be described as its eyes, it sent a chill down my body. The eyes were bright red and seemed to glow from within. It looked at us for maybe five seconds before it spread its wings as wide as they could apparently go started to flap them, it then slowly gained altitude, flapping those wings faster and faster till it was above the building and gone. We could not get back to my apartment fast enough, once inside we closed and bolted the door shut.*

Manuel was able to meet with two of the witnesses. The third said he'd contact Manuel later, but as far as I know, he never did.

Manuel released the following statement regarding that conversation:

> *Spoke with two of the witnesses yesterday and both seem to be sincere and well-educated professional individuals. Both individuals, a male of 26 years old and a female of 28 years old have been at their jobs for five and seven years respectively, and both do admit to drinking but both confirm that they have never done anything stronger than marijuana.*

The third witness was unable to meet with us, he indicated that he would get in touch with me at a later date. I was given some background information on the third witness, he is around the same age as both the witnesses I interviewed, professional and educated as well.

According to the witnesses, they had gone out after work and had arrived at the Green Line Station at Harlem and Lake at about 11:30 p.m. and headed to the male witness' apartment which was about three blocks from the train station.

As they were walking toward the apartment, they reportedly saw a large human-shaped entity with large black wings landing across the street from them. They described the entity as being approximately six to six and a half feet tall, very skinny and lanky with very large wings which were approximately 10 feet wide.

When asked how they determined the wings' width, they said that the entity had spread its wings to their full width before taking off into the air. They both described the entity's eyes as bright ruby red which glowed from within as it stared at them for a few seconds before taking off into the air. Both witnesses stated that they watched the entity for about seven to ten seconds before the interview notice them and took him to the air. They described the entity vigorously flapping its wings as it climbed into the air, rising up into the air and above the buildings and out of sight.

The witnesses stood there for about a minute before heading toward their apartment. They described their mood as stunned and shocked.

They both said that they never felt scared or fearful of their sighting.

Both witnesses were interviewed individually and then together, both corroborated each other stories with no deviation. When asked questions meant to embellish or deviate from their stories, both witnesses quickly corrected the investigator indicating that there was no deception or embellishment of the story. It is the investigator's opinion that both witnesses are credible and that the story seems to be truthful.

Oak Park is a village on the western border of Chicago, less than 10

miles from Lake Michigan. The village is bordered on the southwest by the Fullersburg Woods Forest Preserve, and the Des Plaines River to the south. Again, that's typical of all of these sightings; never forget it. None of them are particularly far from natural areas, not as the Mothman flies.

A few months later, Lon received a report from a woman and her friend who said they saw a "dark winged being" in Chicago's West Lakeview neighborhood. The two women said their encounter took place on Thursday, April 12th, 2018 near the intersection of North Greenview Avenue and West Diversey Parkway.

"On Friday April 20, 2018 I received a telephone call from a woman in Chicago, in reference to a sighting that her and a friend had on Thursday, April 12, 2018 at approximately 7:15 p.m. CT," said Lon.

"It was early dusk, but still plenty of ambient light available," he explained. "They both heard a brief 'deep bellowing sound' emanating from the area of the intersection. As they both looked towards that direction, a dark winged being flew in front of them, towards the west, at an altitude of 15 feet or so. Then suddenly the being 'vanished' from their sight, as if it had been 'swallowed up' somehow. There was no further sound or remnants of the being. The women told me that a man across the street also observed the incident, and immediately began to run in the opposite direction. The women stated that they were 'paralyzed' and could not move or talk for almost 20 seconds after the event. They then hurriedly walked towards their residences."

"When they returned home, they were 'confused and drained of energy'," Lon continued. "They were fearful of what they saw and agreed not to report the sighting. A week after the incident, one of the women had noticed some of the previous internet reports of a similar winged being in the Chicago. At that time, she contacted me. I was eventually able to talk with both witnesses."

"The observation of the winged being was very brief," Lon noted. "But the women stated that it was almost black in color and that the wings were somewhat folded along the body, which was six to seven feet in length. No other details of the winged being were available."

These two women were so spooked that they not only insisted on anonymity, but also refused to speak to other members of our task force. I wasn't offended by that; I'd seen how these sightings can affect people. I mention it mostly to emphasize that point.

Not all of our interrupted journeys were on foot, which, of course, makes sense. We spend enough of our lives in cars these days that it was inevitable we'd receive a number of reports from inside of them, something already represented in the reports we've seen so far.

Lon received a call on Tuesday, September 26th, 2017 from a Chicago nightclub performer who claimed to have seen an "unknown being" crouched on top of a light pole.

"He had just gotten off of work and was driving home, westbound on W. Belmont Ave," said Lon.

According to Lon, at 1:15 a.m. CT, the man "had stopped for the red light at the intersection of West Belmont Avenue and North Damen Avenue in the West Lakeview area. He was the only driver and person at the location. As he waited for the red light to change, he noticed to his left something large was perched on the streetlight pole that extended over North Damon Avenue. As the witness looked closer, he recognized an unknown being crouched down on top of the pole. The streetlight above the pole illuminated the being, giving the witness a brief opportunity to obtain an excellent observation."

"The witness stated that the entity was crouched for about five to ten seconds, then stood up on two distinct legs. As it stood, it unfurled its wings and quickly ascended into the night sky," he said. "The witness told me that it looked like a 'man-bat' and was at least six feet tall. It had human-like arms and legs, though very slender. The body and head were slender, but proportionate. The wingspan was approximately 12 feet and leather-like. The body was very dark in color. The face of the being was quite interesting. The witness states that it had a short, canine-like snout...similar to that of a French bulldog. But the overall face structure resembled that of a Gothic gargoyle. The eyes did not glow or show color. He doesn't know if the being reacted to his presence. When the being unfurled its wings and ascended, the witness could hear the loud flapping of the wings, even though his windows were closed. The witness stated that the overall shape of the winged being reminded him of the 'Man-Bat' character in Batman, though it was slenderer and less intimidating."

"The witness had not heard of the previous sightings," Lon added. "He later contacted a friend, who told him about the rash of sightings in the Chicago area and where to report his encounter. The witness had no emotion or physical reaction to this sighting but was initially shocked and confused by what he was looking at."

"This is the best facial description received by us," Lon said. "Though, I believe that there are several winged beings with varied descriptions."

I'd agree with that assessment. While some of the discrepancies in the witnesses' descriptions could be chalked up to the fallibility of human perception and our inability to verbalize something so far outside of our experience, there are certain variations that made me doubt we were seeing the same creature, or specific type of creature, in every encounter. I can reconcile a difference in height or wingspan easily enough, but when some eyewitnesses report leathery skin, while others say what they saw was covered in fur or even scales, then I wonder.

Some reports were so vague, too, that I could only wonder if the missing details would contradict or reinforce other accounts. Such was the case with a December 2018 sighting out of Indiana.

The sighting was reported to Lon over the telephone, and took place on December 26th, 2018 between 4 p.m. and 4:30 p.m.

"[The witness] and his wife were traveling southbound on a county road, about a mile south of the Prairie Creek Reservoir near Muncie, Indiana," Lon said. "The date was December 26th, 2018 at dusk. A huge flying object caught [his] attention."

[The witness] is a military veteran, hunter, trapper and farmer who lives in the immediate area," he continued. "His knowledge of military flying craft, wildlife and his keen sense of observance was apparent while I talked to him. The winged being that he was observing was unlike anything he had ever seen before. The creature was flying just above treetop level and was easily visible to the witness. His reaction was to slam on his brakes in wonderment, exclaiming to his wife 'do you see that?' His wife was shaken by the sudden stop and was unable to react fast enough to see the winged being."

The general description given by the witness was very similar to other reports of winged humanoids around Lake Michigan, including the stillness of its wings in flight—which, he said, had a leathery texture.

"[He] stated that the being was humanoid in shape with an obvious 'face,'" Lon said. "The body had a length of approximately six to seven feet, with bat-like wings that were extremely wide. The being was dark-colored, and seemed to glide at a steady speed. He never noticed the flapping of wings while watching the creature."

However, certain details were unfortunately vague. He was unable to discern if the creature had any additional limbs beyond its wings, nor could he recognize fine detail in its face—especially unfortunate, considering our earlier description.

But, like many of the other reports, the sighting did have a profound effect on this witness.

"[The witness'] wife states that [he] has been truly affected by the incident and has constantly mentioned it to her, in an attempt to explain what this winged being really was," Lon explained. "He had refused to mention the incident outside of his family. When [he] read about the recent sightings in Gary, Indiana, he called his wife from his job and asked her to contact me right away. He later called me when he got home. This witness was very forthcoming and anxious to find out what this creature was."

A frustrating set of descriptors, to be sure. Though not nearly as bafflingly inconsistent as the case of the humanoid “bat-dragon” reported out of Mukwonago, Wisconsin.

The sighting occurred in mid-April 2017, and the initial report was sent to Lon.

> *In mid-April of [2017], I was sitting inside my car which was parked facing north in the driveway at my home, located between Eagle-Palmyra and Mukwonago, Wisconsin. I had been having an extended phone conversation with an old friend on the way home and had not gone inside the house yet, and remember looking at the radio-clock at approximately 10:45 p.m. It had been a dreary, overcast, misty and rainy day, one of those days where it just drizzled non-stop, but never turned into an outright heavy downpour. While shooting the breeze about the day’s events, I looked up briefly from the dash of my vehicle, a minivan, and momentarily noticed “someone” who was very, very tall, and very dark just standing in the rain, about five to ten feet at most in front of the vehicle, perfectly still with raindrops dripping down off their body. It was rather dark, but there is a post-lamp at the end of the driveway near the road, about forty to fifty feet from where I was parked, so I could make out the silhouette with a slight bit of back-lighting from the lamp. As I had been in mid-conversation, I looked away for one second, my brain not immediately registering or comprehending what I had just seen, so*

*within about a second and a half, I did a "double-take," as I suddenly thought, "Wait a minute...what the **** was THAT?!?!?"*

As I forcibly directed my unbelieving gaze back up toward the front of the vehicle, I said to my friend on the phone, "You're not going to believe this...," and I proceeded to quickly turn on my headlamps and stare at this "thing" as I gave a concise, yet detailed-as-possible description to my buddy while I was literally shaking and scared out of my wits. I was looking at a creature, for lack of a better term, that essentially looked like a seven-foot bat / reptile of some sort. The head was at the level of the roof of my minivan, or slightly more elevated than my roof, and it was standing perfectly still just staring right at me. Its eyes were large, taking up a significant portion of the thing's head, from what I could make out, and although they were dark, like large black eyeballs, there was a glint of reflection in them which allowed me to discern that they were, in fact, definitely its eyes. It was haunting, for lack of a better way to put it. I'm actually getting super creeped-out just recalling the memory of the event! I also noticed that besides the creature's height, it was also quite large, possessing extraordinarily swarthy coloration, though slightly reflective, like skin or scales of some kind, not feather nor fur-covered from what I could tell. It was at least as wide as a very large man, but did not seem "stocky", as it were, and as I stared at it uncomfortably. I realized that it actually had huge wings, but they were wrapped around its body, exactly as a bat wraps its wings around its body while sleeping upside-down. Except, this thing was standing right-side-up, looking right at me, or almost "through me" and let me just say, it definitely seemed OMINOUS.

My initial reaction was to tell my buddy on the phone that I was looking right at a giant "bat-dragon looking thing", to which he asked if I had been drinking or something, and I assured him that this thing was really standing there, and I was looking right at it. The bottom of its face (mouth?) was completely covered by its fleshy-looking wings wrapped around its body, and I could tell that whatever it was, it was certainly physically powerful, as the rather wide "shoulder-wing" area appeared to show some manner of musculature. The way it was "standing" there, it seemed to likely have a general humanoid body-shape under the wrapped wings. I

could not see its "feet" since it was standing too close to the vehicle, nor could I see anything below about what I imagine would be considered knee-level on the creature. That's how close it was. I was very afraid. As soon as I had given my friend on the phone a description of what I was seeing, I noticed that it seemed to VERY QUICKLY "move", although I did not see it unwrap its wings, or walk, per se, but there was simply what I will describe as a brief blur in the headlights, and it was GONE. The entire time of observation before it vanished was realistically only about twelve seconds, but considering the uneasy, wayward way that thing was leering at me, even that was TOO LONG!

Now, being on the verge of panicking, my friend, who was still on the line, attempted to make light of the situation, and although appreciative of his friendly candor, I got out my trusty LED emergency flashlight from the glove box and told him that I was not about to continue sitting out there any longer, and was retiring to the house indoors for the night! The remainder of that evening was uncomfortable, but uneventful.

I mentioned the experience to one other friend, a work associate who has had a lifelong interest in such unusual subject matter, but I otherwise kept it to myself for fear of ridicule, and also because the experience, albeit brief—came across as more than just a sighting of a rare animal or cryptozoological remnant of some archaic species long thought extinct, but seemed to be something "else," something of an entirely "different nature."

Even more unsettling, was that about a week to two weeks later, that same old buddy I had been speaking with the night of the experience called me to inquire if I had watched or heard the news the previous evening. I informed him that I had not. After having initially assumed that I had gone completely out of my mind, for well over a week, he informed me that my sanity had been vindicated. Numerous encounters with the same creature had been recently reported in Chicago and northern Illinois, in largely populated areas.

To date, I have not had any further visits from the creature.

Lon was able to speak to the witness over the phone after receiving the report.

"I called the witness, and asked him to detail the encounter once again," Strickler said. "There was very little deviation from the written report...other than that the winged being had a dark grayish color and literally vanished without unfurling its wings. The conversation was very intense and the witness was noticeably affected by the encounter...even 13 months since the incident."

I spoke to the witness not long after, and the content of that telephone call was largely consistent with the report submitted to Lon. The witness reported during the call that he thought it might be possible that the creature seemingly disappeared after moving out of the light, and noted how quickly a bird of prey is able to take off from the ground—meaning that perhaps the winged being moved quickly out of the light and then into the air unseen. He also placed the date of the sighting as possibly the 14th of April. Historical weather data from Mukwonago on that date is consistent with his description of a "dreary, overcast, misty and rainy day."

Emily and I were able to investigate the sighting area, and spoke to the witness in person. He recounted his story and it was consistent with what had been presented earlier. He did add that he had heard a "mixture of high-pitched screeching combined with screaming" several times outside of his home at night, and speculated that perhaps it could be related. He also said that he spoke to his friend, and the only detail his friend would add to the incident is that the witness was silent for several seconds prior to saying anything about the encounter over the phone—presumably due to the shock of what he was witnessing. We verified all of the geographic information, too; it all matched his report.

I was impressed. He was clearly nervous to be discussing it, even in broad daylight. It’s one thing to read about that fear, or even hear it over the phone, but to see it on the face of another adult—it's jarring. Not to mention convincing.

This was one of two reports out of Wisconsin that involved witnesses in stopped vehicles. The other was overall less impressive, but interesting nonetheless. Thirty miles east, in Milwaukee, a couple claimed to have been accosted by a bat-like flying humanoid with "large glowing red eyes" while parked near a state forest area.

Lon received the report via email.

I discovered your website after doing some looking around

on the web regarding flying creature reports. After reading through your blog I felt comfortable to report what happened to me and my boyfriend recently in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

This occurred on April 13th, 2018 at about 10-10:30 p.m. We were parked in the parking lot next to Schoenecker Park which is right off of Douglas Avenue. I do not wish to discuss what we were parked there for, suffice to say it's a dark place to park at night.

My boyfriend looked up and totally freaked out when he says he saw a pair of large glowing red eyes staring right back at him. I looked up and saw something standing in front of my car with two glowing red eyes. It made a sound of chirping sound that we heard when we turned down the radio. When we moved, it put what looked like a hand on the hood of the car and then we saw what looked like wings spread wide open. I panicked and turned on the car which automatically turned on my headlights and it lit up what looked like a large bat. It had black skin that looked like glossy, wet leather that shined in the light. It then screamed at us, pushing its head out and its arms back and then flew up into the air. You could hear the wings flapping as it jumped up and within a few seconds, it landed behind my car, its body still able to be seen when I pressed the brakes and the brake lights shined.

Both of us were screaming at this point when it flew back up in the air and landed about six feet from the passenger side door where my boyfriend sat. We wasted no time in trying to get out of there. As we backed up and whipped the car around, we saw it land in front of us off to the side of the car about three feet away. I honked my horn and turned on my brights and it screamed again and flew up into the air. We screeched onto Douglas Avenue and headed toward I think it was Hopkins Street when my boyfriend says he saw it land again just off the road on his side of the car. We did not stop to investigate and floored the car to get out of there. We got onto Hopkins and were passing the apartment buildings when we saw something fly right over the car, lower than the lamp post, screaming as it flew out of sight.

We got to my house and stayed in the car for about 15 to 20 minutes, I was hysterical and crying and my boyfriend was shaken up. It took me another 30 minutes to get myself together and go drop

off my boyfriend and drive myself back home. I have had repeated nightmares since then and it's been difficult to sleep without the closet light on. My boyfriend also says he has had nightmares.

I hope you believe me and that you don't think I'm crazy. It could not have been a large bird like some people seem to say it might be. I know whatever it was must have been intelligent, it's just a feeling that I have that tells me so.

Lon made contact with the witness through email, and received additional details of the sighting.

I estimate it stood about seven feet tall, and the wingspan has to been about seven to eight feet or more wide. I almost got the feeling like it was toying with us, it knew we were scared shitless and it toyed with that by scaring us even further.

As far as physical reactions, it took me a few hours to finally get back to somewhat normal. I threw up twice just from jitters and I had a feeling like I was being watched, even though the curtains were closed.

Currently, I still feel like I'm being watched, almost like I'm marked in some way. Last night was the first night I slept without the lights being on and it took me about an hour and half to finally fall asleep. It's put me off to wanting to go out at night anymore, even though I have to in order to finish college by July.

We've been out to that same spot countless times previous and this is the first time we've seen this thing.

Initially, Lon withheld the exact sighting location to "prevent so-called local investigators from harassing witnesses." The information was shared with Emily and me, though, and naturally we volunteered to investigate the sighting area. Following that, it was agreed that we'd share the sighting location at our own discretion, since the photos we had taken could be used to identify it, regardless. I tried to contact the witness prior to visiting Schoenecker Park, using the email address provided to Lon, but never received any response.

The lot in which the witnesses were parked was located between two baseball diamonds, and, beyond those, bordered to the south and west by the

Havenwoods State Forest; immediately to the east was Hopkins Street. It didn't have any lighting of its own, outside of the nearby stadium lights that wouldn't have been on, and I could imagine how dark it must get at night. Despite the relative proximity of urban development to the east, Schoenecker Park is strangely isolated—a perfectly lonely spot to encounter a monster in Milwaukee, if one were going to.

The final two reports to round out our nighttime incursions of the impossible come from witnesses travelling for business. Both were submitted to Manuel.

The first reported sighting took place at around 11:30 p.m. on February 15th, 2018 and was sent by a witness who claimed to have seen a "giant, skinny man with a large pair of wings and red eyes" while pulling out of a truck stop off of Interstate 41. The location of the sighting was about a mile south of the Wisconsin/Illinois border, just off of Interstate 41—the interstate highway that connects the interchange of I-94 and U.S. Route 41. The truck stop is at the intersection of the interstate and Russell Road, and is bordered to the east by the Van Patten Woods Forest Preserve.

I was driving home on Route 94. I pulled in to the TA truck stop to get something to drink and something to eat before finishing my trip home. It was about 11:30 p.m. on February 15, 2018 when I left the store and got in my car, as I was pulling out of the parking lot to get onto the interstate, I noticed what looked like a large person standing to the side of the road. This thing looked right at me with very bright red eyes and then opened a huge pair of wings and started to fly off like some kind of big bat. The whole damn thing took less than five seconds but I know what I saw and it looked like a giant, skinny man with a large pair of wings and red eyes. I'm not sure what to tell you that it was, but I can assure you it's something I've never seen on the Discovery Channel before.

Manuel was able to interview the witness.

"I spoke with the witness regarding his sighting," he said.

"The witness is a 37-year-old male who lives in Gurnee, Illinois but works in Racine, Wisconsin. The witness works as an industrial welder and has worked at the same position for 21 years. The witness stated that he takes the same route five to six times a week and has stopped at the truck stop multiple times, [but has] never seen anything like what he saw that night,"

explained Manuel.

“He stopped at the TA truck stop and spent about roughly 10 minutes inside the store,” he continued. “The witness got in his car and started heading back toward the highway when he saw what looked like a large winged humanoid. He stated that the encounter did not last very long and that during the encounter he saw a large humanoid figure that was solid black with a large pair of wings. The creature was hunched over and appear to be looking at something on the ground when the witness pulled up. The witness says that when he illuminated the creature, it looked up. Then the witness says that the creature took a couple of steps away from him and started flapping its wings and took off into the air.”

According to Manuel, “The witness seemed very sincere, albeit scared and a little bewildered. When asked questions meant to mislead, the witness quickly corrected me and stuck with the original story. He stated that the creature was out of sight within a matter of seconds and that he did not get out of the vehicle because he was a little frightened. When asked if others might have seen it, the witness stated that there must be others because it is a busy truck stop. Further investigation of the area and the possibility of posting flyers asking if other witnesses have seen the entity will be necessary.”

If there were flyers posted and if they yielded any results, I never found out about it.

The second report was from two married truckers who claimed to have seen a winged humanoid resembling a “large owl” at around 12:30 a.m. on October 26th, 2018 in Alsip, Illinois.

"The report was submitted by an older couple who work as an over-the-road team for a trucking company in Alsip, IL," Manuel said. "They both have been driving together for over 15 years and have been married for over 27 years. The gentleman was at the wheel of the truck when the encounter occurred and his wife was in the passenger seat. I spoke to both of them at the same time at a local restaurant near the truck yard in Alsip, IL. "

"Both agreed to have the story submitted but asked that their names be kept confidential due to the nature of their work and the fact that they did not want someone from their company (who was also based in Alsip, Illinois) to find out about their sighting," he continued.

The report reads:

We were on our way to park our truck at the yard after being on the road for two weeks. As we approached the railroad track crossing, we noticed something standing in the middle of the road and thought it was a homeless person walking along the tracks. We popped on the high intensity lights and to our surprise, it was not a homeless person at all. This thing looked like a large owl, as in it had what looked like feathers and a flat rounded face with large eyes that reflected the LED lights on our truck. This thing appeared to lunge at us, while trying to cover its eyes with its left arm. [Name redacted by request] pulled on the airhorn and this thing turned its back on us and then took a couple of steps and then took off into the air and flew off into the night.

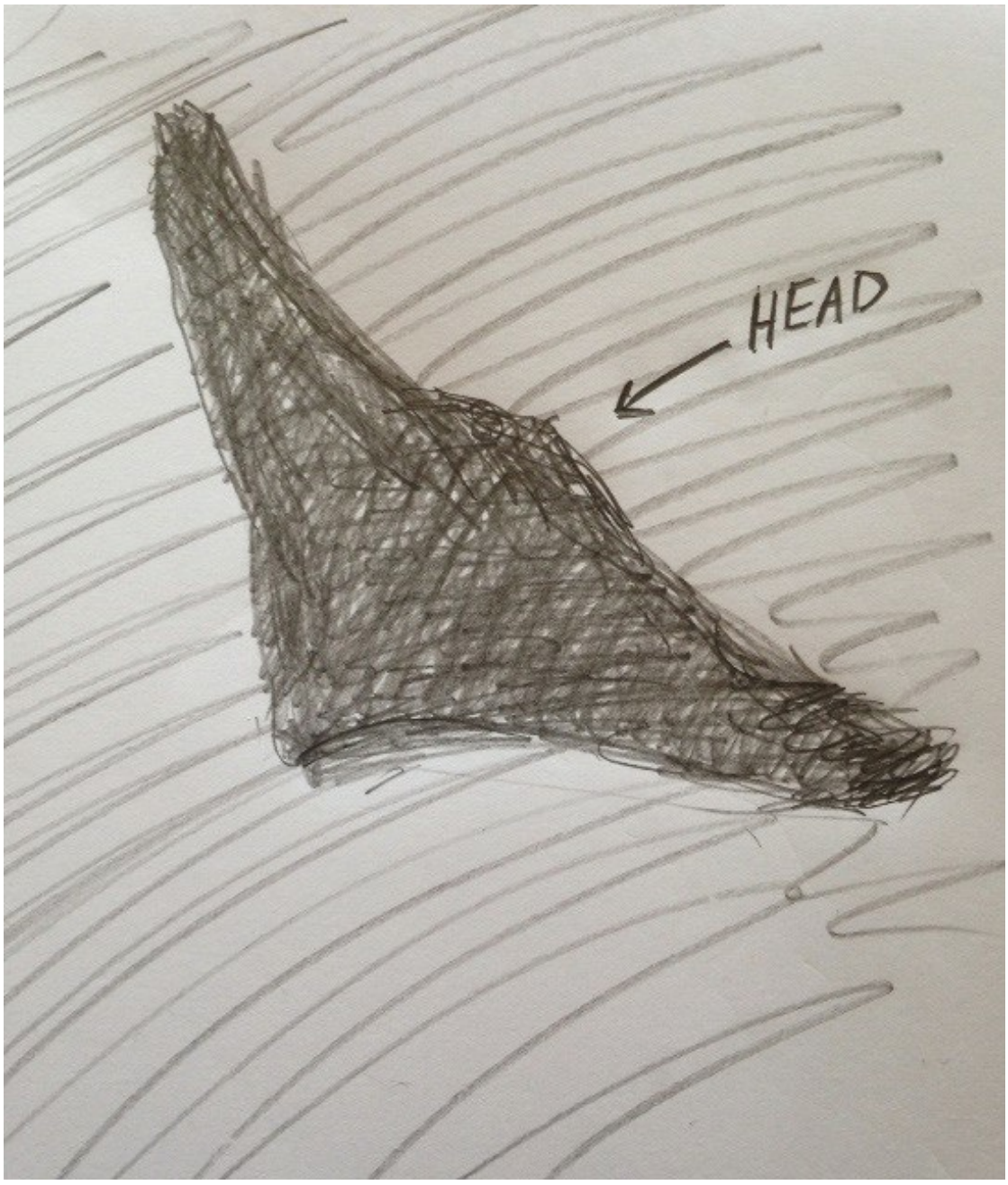
We were left sitting there in complete shock as we watched it disappear into the night. After a minute or two of looking to see if the damn thing would come back around, we continued into the yard. We parked our truck and walked toward the car, as we were almost at the car, we heard what sounded like a scream followed by another and then silence. We hustled our tails to the car and left for home.

"The area [of] the sighting is heavily industrialized with a few residential areas nearby," Manuel explained. "The railroad crossing mentioned sits approximately ¾ of a mile from the entrance and is surrounded by a wooded area on West 122nd Street and is across the street from a Coca Cola plant. I accompanied the couple to the location of the sighting and will be posting information on the location in the future."

"The investigation is still ongoing and a [UFO Clearinghouse investigator] is currently speaking with the land owner in order to obtain permission to mount a trail-cam at the site in order to get 'round the clock photographic evidence to help us further the investigation," he said of the actions taken to investigate the sighting.

This is another one where, if any further action was ever actually taken, I never found out about it. No more evidence or information has surfaced. I was given the email address of the couple and contacted them myself, but never received any response.

These interrupted journeys represent the best and the worst of what we encountered in this investigation, although none more so than what we found in Woodstock, Illinois.



The Albany Park/Lincoln Square witness sketch. *(UFO Clearinghouse)*

The witness' van parked in roughly the same location as the night of his sighting. *(top)*

Investigator Tobias Wayland standing in the approximate spot of the creature relative to the van. *(bottom) (Emily Wayland / Singular Fortean Society)*

The lamppost mentioned in the sighting report is about 50 feet away from where the van was parked. *(top)* The view to the north across the road. *(bottom) (Emily Wayland / Singular Fortean Society)*

CHAPTER TWENTY TWO
NOT EXACTLY A LOVE-IN

Woodstock, Illinois is a quiet suburb of Chicago, about 35 miles west of Lake Michigan, and surrounded by wooded parks and conservation areas. Like many of the sightings before it, the Woodstock sightings started with an email. In late February of 2019, Lon received an email from the wife of a man who said her husband had recently had an encounter with a strange being on the evening of February 22nd.

> *My husband was returning home last night, February 22nd, at approximately 8 p.m., from a trip to Walgreens. While driving home, he saw something…coming across the road from the DuField Pond entrance on Country Club Road in Woodstock, Illinois. He said it was approximately a third the width of the road, eight to nine feet tall, and part of it looked leathery—but he wouldn't call it leather exactly. He is interested in speaking to you about it, but this afternoon he didn't seem ready to talk to you. I've asked him if he could sketch what he saw before he forgets. He indicated he's NOT going to forget this.*
>
> *Just wanted to give you a heads up, and wondered if you have received any other reports in the Woodstock, Illinois vicinity.*

That email was followed shortly with another that included a photograph of a footprint.

> *He said he will call you tomorrow if that's okay. I was home when this happened, so didn't see anything. All I know is I believe my husband. I did go out to DuField this morning because we've had snow/ice/slush to see if I could see any traces of whatever this was. There were a lot of tracks/prints near the entrance—mostly boot*

prints, but some did not look like boots. However, it was hard to tell. I took photos/videos of the area.

Lon was able to speak over the telephone to the man who had the sighting.

"I then talked to [the witness], who stated that he was driving on Country Club Road near the entrance to the Dufield Pond Conservation Area in Woodstock, Illinois. Suddenly, a large biped ran out onto the road approximately 30 feet ahead of him and quickly crossed to the opposite side," said Lon.

"He said that he thought that it may have been a Bigfoot initially, but then noticed that it had a large set of membrane wings attached to the back, extending over the top of its head," he continued. "He described the shape of the wings as that of a gargoyle. The body was eight to nine feet in height and covered in dark fur. The arms and legs were well defined. He didn't notice any facial features. [He] got an excellent look at the creature since his headlights illuminated it and the light from the conservation area backlit it as well."

That description reminded me of what Floyd Hancock said he'd seen as a boy back in Indiana in 1969.

"He also stated that he had felt like it was a warning or harbinger of some kind," Lon added. "He did mention 'Nephilim' when discussing the encounter. [He said] it had upset him and that he was unable to talk about it until the next day."

This witness wasn't the first to ascribe a supernatural explanation to his sighting. I didn't blame him for doing so any more than I did anybody else up to that point.

I spoke to the witness myself for the first time over the phone on February 25th.

He confirmed the story he had told Lon, and said that he or his wife would visit the area to try and find better footprints in the mud; although, ultimately, they didn't find any.

I made plans with him to travel to Woodstock almost immediately after hearing his story. The fear in his voice was authentic; this man had been deeply affected by what he'd seen.

Emily and I visited the sighting area on March 9th and spoke to the witness and his wife. He reaffirmed his earlier testimony, emphasizing that he

did not wish to embellish his story and would only recount the facts as he experienced them. I was impressed. These were upstanding, intelligent people; they could be your neighbors, your coworkers, your friends or family—something that could, in fairness, be said about the vast majority of the witnesses with whom I've spoken. But they were a particularly fine example of it.

They very graciously walked us around the edge of the 78-acre Dufield Pond Conservation Area, and to the sighting location. The geography was as described by the witness initially. Whatever he had seen, it had run out from the entrance of the nature preserve and across the street, between a house and the tree line on the edge of the property; after that he lost sight of it in the darkness, but he knew it must have been going in the direction of the McHenry County Fairgrounds, which were directly behind the house. Behind the fairgrounds were fields and natural landscapes.

We found a number of natural tracks near the entrance, including the three-toed footprints of cranes or herons, canine tracks, and a number of boot prints. One track stood out to me. It was by itself, with no matching tracks nearby, and looked like a hugely distorted barefoot human footprint in the ice. It was roughly three times as wide and long as my own size 12 boot, and appeared to have clearly articulated toes. It occurred to me that perhaps a runner had been in the area recently wearing those 'barefoot' shoes with the individual toes—we had recently seen a few warmer-than-average days—and perhaps one such print could have been melted by the sun, distorting it into its current shape. But, if so, why was it all alone? You'd think there would be other tracks just like it, but there weren't. More than anything, it reminded me of the isolated Bigfoot tracks found in the middle of deserted forests—the ones that begin nowhere in particular and end the same way.

We talked for a good portion of the afternoon, discussing this and the other sightings, seeing what they thought about them. They insisted, and we readily agreed, that all necessary steps to protect their privacy be taken. Which is why, when a reporter from the *Northwest Herald* came sniffing around, I politely but firmly declined her offer to "be a part of the process" of any further investigation. I knew what a circus mainstream media involvement could lead to, and I wasn't about to put these people through that. Maybe I missed out on a little publicity, but quite honestly, it's real obvious who is in this industry for the attention, and it's not me.

It wasn't long after the initial sighting that I received a very

compelling piece of evidence—an actual police report. I had received an email from a witness who claimed to have seen the monster on February 28th in the McHenry County Fairgrounds, which, you'll remember, was right in its path based on the first witness' testimony.

> *I was outside Jewel Osco in Woodstock, Illinois and believe to [have seen] the same visual of an unusual being in the McHenry County Fairgrounds. It screeched at me then charged the fence, about thirty feet from the fence, it had very bright green eyes, [and] had wings and was all black leathery colored. It ran back towards the woods in the McHenry County fairgrounds. I called [the Woodstock police department] and [they] had county sheriffs respond to the location.*

I corresponded briefly with the witness through email, and set up a time to conduct an interview over the phone; but, when the appointed time came, he didn't answer. I left a voicemail and didn't hear from him again. That might have been the end of it, if I hadn't taken a chance with the McHenry County Sheriff's Department. I knew the witness' name, and I had the basic details of his sighting; I was also willing to bet that, if he really had called the police, they'd remember the call from that guy who reported a monster. And they did.

I filed a FOIA request with the sheriff's office, and while an official report was not written, the 911 call information was released. According to the incident detail report documenting the call, at 2:46 a.m. on February 28th, an officer responded to the 911 call of a man who said he'd seen a "mysterious creature described as being 7-8 ft tall and wearing all black" that "charged at him from the fairgrounds screeching at him while he was in the Jewel lot and then it retreated."

"[The witness] named the creature the 'Dufield Pond Swamp Monster,' since he had the first sighting with police involvement," the report continued. "Investigation to continue."

The responding deputy hadn't found a monster, unfortunately, but he had found a frightened witness—one who had taken his sighting seriously enough to call the police.

Several days after a deputy sheriff was looking for monsters in the McHenry County Fairgrounds, another resident had her own unsettling

encounter, this time at home. She asked that I refer to her only as Lisa W.

The initial report was submitted to me by Lisa's husband.

> *My wife described hearing unusual animal type verbal noises a few days ago [March 6th]. Nothing she has heard before. It wasn't any animal, not a raccoon, deer, possum, cat, or dog, or bird. Nothing like anything she'd ever heard, except it sounded like a wild growl. But not an animal, more an odd creature sounding...it sounded like a creature...of unknown origin. Very scary, [she] was [woken] up by this in the middle of the night, about 1:30 a.m. She was wide awake when the noises occurred.*

In subsequent emails, I was able to communicate directly with Lisa, who told me that she was alone in the house while her husband was away on business when she heard the noise.

Lisa and her husband live near the western edge of town, just south of Bates Park; less than two miles northwest of the Dufield Pond Conservation Area.

"As strange as this will sound, the best way to describe the noise would be like a creature sound from a movie. Not howling, more sinister and demon/monster-like," she explained. "The sound I heard happened twice, then stopped. I sat up in bed, didn't move, (made sure I was fully awake), and knew it was coming a distance away from our building. About 1:30 in the morning as I looked at the clock."

Nothing outside was disturbed, as far as Lisa could tell; although, admittedly, she did not investigate.

"It was very late and I didn't leave to go outside to look around," she said. "Actually, I would have been too afraid! I didn't know how far the noise was, so I didn't think to go looking for tracks. Maybe I should have, but it seemed a bit far and as I said, it was very late at night and [my husband] was gone. It woke me up. If I hear any more, I'll try to look and see if I can find anything or see anything."

She didn't contact me after that, so presumably she hasn't heard the sound again—at least not yet.

The day after Lisa heard her demonic growling, less than two weeks after the initial sighting, a fourth report was received. The initial email was sent to Lon by the witness' mother on March 7th.

My daughter just saw this on Rose Farm Road in Woodstock, Illinois while driving home. It ran in front of her car. She is extremely freaked out right now. She described it as extremely tall with fur and large wings. She said when she saw it, she had an overwhelming sense of dread. I hope this helps with your investigation.

The witness' mother did sign her name to the email, but we had little luck in contacting the woman for more details, or to schedule an onsite interview and investigation.

Lon only received a single response from the woman, who said "I'll have [my daughter] call you tomorrow afternoon," explaining that she had heard of the other sighting after it was "reported locally" and found Lon's email through an internet search.

That response came on March 9th, but Lon has yet to be called by the witness.

"The witness has been reluctant to comment beyond the initial report...mostly out of fear," he said. "The local media has also been causing some unwanted excitement in the community as well. Phantoms & Monsters Fortean Research has refused to cooperate with the local media because of this."

"We are continuing to stay in touch with this witness in the hope that further details will be offered," he added.

I can only imagine the pandemonium that would have erupted if I'd actually included the local media. As much as I enjoy reading about the chaos caused by media-fed hysteria in monster sighting flaps from the '60s and '70s, I had no desire to live through one, and I think we handled things as well as we could, as well as anybody could under the circumstances. We might have had a whole host of hoaxes to sift through and even fewer sincere witnesses coming forward if we'd allowed the local news to turn Woodstock into a circus.

Thirty miles northwest and three days after the initial sighting in Woodstock, a woman travelling to work in Wisconsin had an encounter with what she called a "flying witch".

Lon took the report over the phone.

"[The witness] was traveling west on Creek Road on her way to work [at 5:30 a.m.]. As she approached the Turtle Creek bridge, she observed a large winged being that she described as a 'flying witch.' The being was at a

tree-top altitude and was gliding in her direction. It was early dawn, but enough light was available for [her] to make out a form. The winged being suddenly descended towards [her] car and barely missed colliding with the hood. [She] described that the being's wingspan was much wider than her car and that the body was a 'brownish' color, like a 'paper bag.' The body looked feminine and slight. The wings were bat-shaped and very large. She never noticed the wings flapping. The speed in which it descended was 'not natural.' The face was unremarkable, almost 'blank.' [She] noted that she swerved and almost hit the guard rail," said Lon.

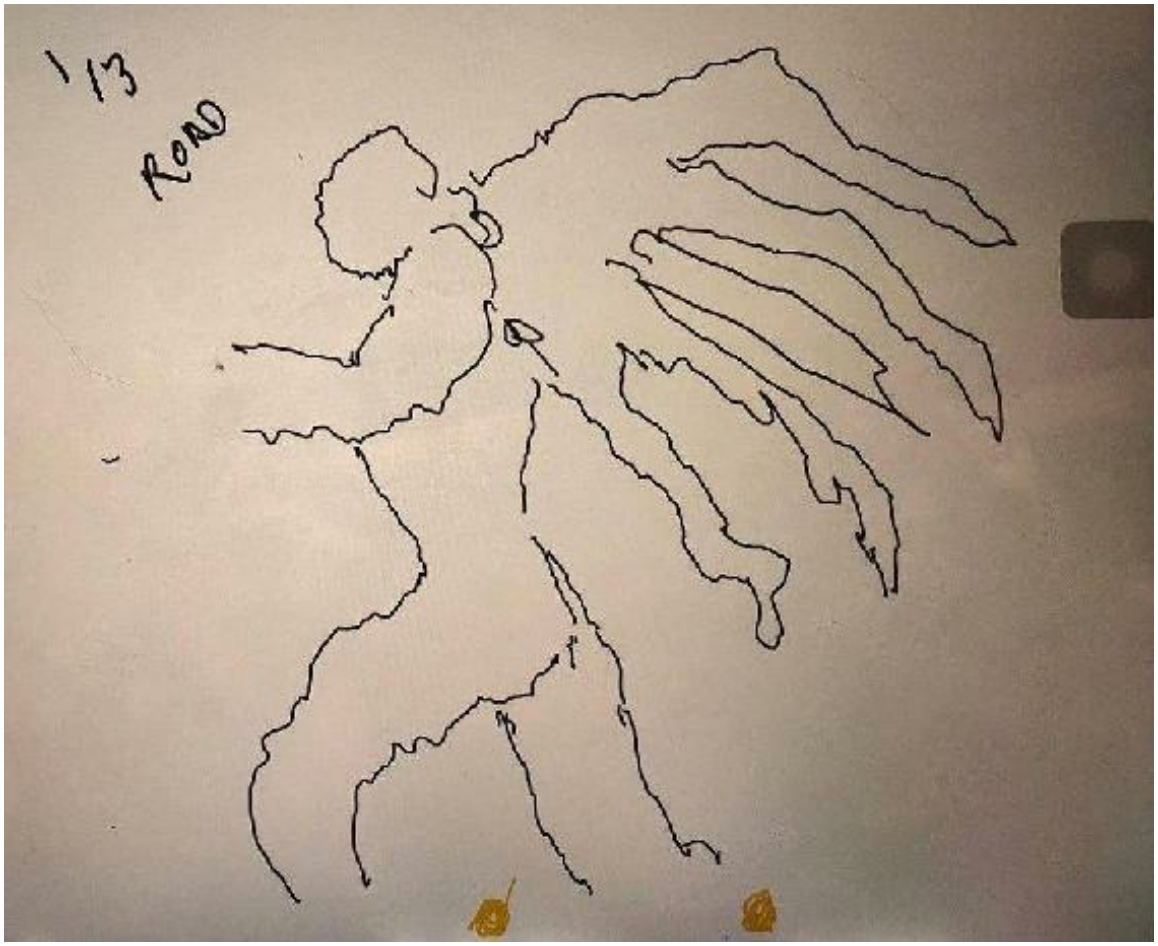
"[The witness] did not notice where the winged being flew to after the encounter. [She] is of Hispanic descent and stated that the being looked similar to a 'witch' that was described to her as a child. [She] was quite upset and worried that she may encounter this being in the future," he explained.
I had to consider that her comparison of the creature to a witch had to do with the legend of the Lechuza. I don't know for sure, because I never ended up speaking with her. After consulting with Lon, I opted not to contact this witness.

Contact information for witnesses was routinely shared between he and I, but in this case, Lon mentioned that he had not initially secured permission from the witness for other investigators to contact her.

He spoke to the witness again, but she was reluctant to discuss the matter further.
Lon described the witness as "skittish," and added she told him that "she is afraid that the more she talks about it, the more likely it will come for her." Based on that assessment, and my commitment to the comfort and safety of witnesses, I decided that she was better left alone for the time being. It wasn't the first time a witness has been afraid to discuss their sighting out of fear of retribution by the phenomenon. It's come up in my own investigations more than once. So, I understood; I'm here to help people, not exploit them for a story.

The furor in Woodstock died down considerably by April, until it had petered out entirely by the end of spring. And the same can be said for sightings in other areas, too. I always considered that the 2017 and 2018 sightings were inflated by misidentifications, and I expect the reports of something truly strange to be fewer and further between. There was no great event that marked the end of the sightings, because I don't think they ever will end; nor do I think they did after Point Pleasant. I think this weird,

winged humanoid—this Lake Michigan Mothman—has haunted us since at least 1966, and other than a few short breaks here and there, I think it always will.

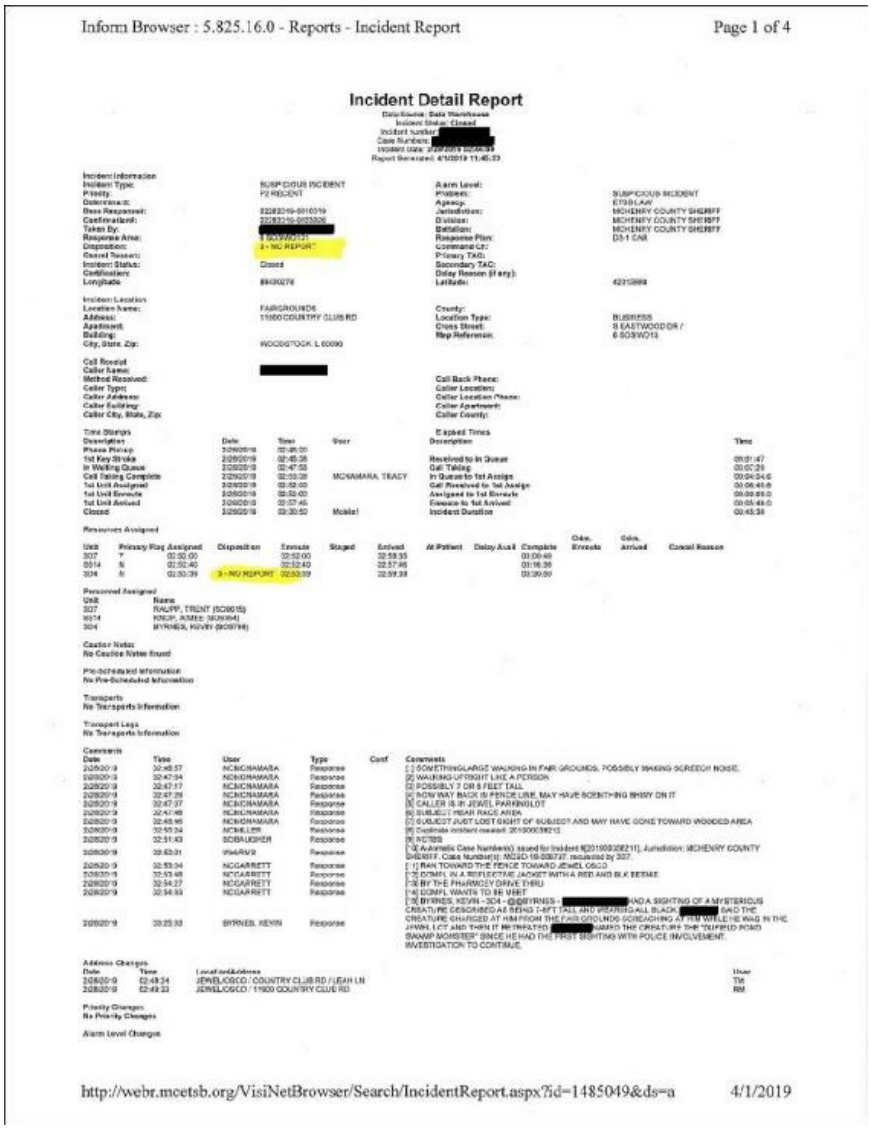


A rough sketch of the creature's silhouette drawn by the witness. *(top)* The photograph of a footprint provided by the witness. *(bottom) (Phantoms & Monsters)*

The entrance to Dufield Pond, from where the creature must have come prior to crossing the road. *(top)*
Directly across the street from the entrance. *(bottom) (Emily Wayland / Singular Fortean Society)*

The view facing the street from the driveway leading into Dufield Pond. This area is closed to regular vehicle traffic during the winter months. *(top)*
The Dufield Pond Conservation Area is approximately 78 acres in size. *(bottom) (Emily Wayland / Singular Fortean Society)*

The track found on the Dufield Pond driveway. Investigator Tobias Wayland's size 12 boot is in the lower right of the photograph for scale. *(top)*
A rough outline of the track. *(bottom) (Emily Wayland / Singular Fortean Society)*



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Incident Detail Report

Data Source: Data Warehouse
Incident Status: Closed
Incident Number: [redacted]
Case Number(s): [redacted]
Incident Date: 2/20/2019 02:04:39
Report Generated: 4/1/2019 11:46:23

Incident Information

Incident Type:	SUSPICIOUS INCIDENT	Alarm Level:	
Priority:	P2 RECENT	Problem:	SUSPICIOUS INCIDENT
Determinant:		Agency:	6799 LAW
Date Requested:	2/20/2019 02:16:19	Jurisdiction:	MCHENRY COUNTY SHERIFF
Confirmation#:	2/20/2019 02:20:20	Division:	MCHENRY COUNTY SHERIFF
Taken By:	[redacted]	Battalion:	MCHENRY COUNTY SHERIFF
Response Area:	1 BOWDOIN	Response Plan:	D3-1 CAR
Disposition:	3 - NO REPORT	Command Ltr:	
Owned Tenant:		Primary TAC:	
Incident Status:	Closed	Secondary TAC:	
Certifications:		Delay Reason (if any):	
Longitude:	88430278	Latitude:	42213889

Incident Location

Location Name:	FAIRGROUNDS	County:	
Address:	11600 COUNTRY CLUB RD	Location Type:	BUSINESS
Apartment:		Cross Street:	S EASTWOOD DR /
Building:		Map Reference:	6 SGSWG13
City, State, Zip:	WOODSTOCK, IL 60098		

Call Receipt

Caller Name:	[redacted]		
Method Received:		Call Back Phone:	
Caller Type:		Caller Location:	
Caller Address:		Caller Location *Name:	
Caller Building:		Caller Apartment:	
Caller City, State, Zip:		Caller County:	

Time Stamps

Description	Date	Time	User
Phone Pickup	2/20/2019	02:45:00	
1st Key Stroke	2/20/2019	02:45:36	
In Waiting Queue	2/20/2019	02:47:53	
Call Taking Complete	2/20/2019	02:53:38	MCNAMARA, TRACY
1st Unit Assigned	2/20/2019	02:52:00	
1st Unit Enroute	2/20/2019	02:52:00	
1st Unit Arrived	2/20/2019	02:57:46	
Closed	2/20/2019	03:30:52	Mobile1

Elapsed Times

Description	Time
Received to In Queue	00:01:47
Call Taking	00:07:29
In Queue to 1st Assign	00:04:34.6
Call Received to 1st Assign	00:06:48.6
Assigned to 1st Enroute	00:00:00.0
Enroute to 1st Arrived	00:05:46.6
Incident Duration	00:45:39

Resources Assigned

Unit	Primary Flag	Assigned	Disposition	Enroute	Staged	Arrived	At Patient	Delay Acall	Complete	Odm. Enroute	Odm. Arrived	Cancel Reason
307	Y	02:52:00		02:52:00		02:58:35			03:00:49			
6514	N	02:52:40		02:52:40		02:57:46			03:16:38			
304	N	02:53:39	3 - NO REPORT	02:53:39		02:59:39			03:30:00			

Personnel Assigned

Unit	Name
307	RALPP, TRENT (BC9615)
6514	KNOP, KARIE (BC9364)
304	BYRNES, KEVIN (BC9798)

Caution Notes
No Caution Notes found

Pre-Scheduled Information
No Pre-Scheduled Information

Transports
No Transports Information

Transport Legs
No Transports Information

Comments

Date	Time	User	Type	Conf	Comments
2/20/2019	02:45:57	NCMCNAMARA	Response		[1] SOMETHING LARGE WALKING IN FAIR GROUNDS. POSSIBLY MAKING SCREECH NOISE.
2/20/2019	02:47:04	NCMCNAMARA	Response		[2] WALKING UPRIGHT LIKE A PERSON
2/20/2019	02:47:17	NCMCNAMARA	Response		[3] POSSIBLY 7 OR 8 FEET TALL
2/20/2019	02:47:29	NCMCNAMARA	Response		[4] NOW WAY BACK IN FENCE LINE, MAY HAVE SOMETHING SHINY ON IT
2/20/2019	02:47:37	NCMCNAMARA	Response		[5] CALLER IS JR JEWEL PARKING LOT
2/20/2019	02:47:48	NCMCNAMARA	Response		[6] SUBJECT NEAR RACE AREA
2/20/2019	02:48:46	NCMCNAMARA	Response		[7] SUBJECT JUST LOST SIGHT OF SUBJECT AND MAY HAVE GONE TOWARD WOODED AREA
2/20/2019	02:50:54	MCMILLER	Response		[8] Coordinate incident request: 2019000038215
2/20/2019	02:51:43	SCBAUGHER	Response		[9] ACTBS
2/20/2019	02:52:31	WebRMS	Response		[10] A-Arrests Case Number(s) issued for Incident ID[2019020206211], Jurisdiction: MCHENRY COUNTY SHERIFF, Case Number(s): MCSO-19-000737, requested by 307.
2/20/2019	02:53:04	NCGARRETT	Response		[11] RAN TOWARD THE FENCE TOWARD JEWEL OSCO
2/20/2019	02:53:48	NCGARRETT	Response		[12] COMPL IN A REFLECTIVE JACKET WITH A RED AND BLK BEENIE
2/20/2019	02:54:27	NCGARRETT	Response		[13] BY THE PHARMCEY DRIVE THRU
2/20/2019	02:54:53	NCGARRETT	Response		[14] COMPL WANTS TO BE MEET
2/20/2019	03:25:33	BYRNES, KEVIN	Response		[15] BYRNES, KEVIN - 304 - @@@BYRNES - [redacted] HAD A SIGHTING OF A MYSTERIOUS CREATURE DESCRIBED AS BEING 7-8FT TALL AND WEARING ALL BLACK. [redacted] SAID THE CREATURE CHARGED AT HIM FROM THE FAIR GROUNDS SCREACHING AT HIM WHILE HE WAS IN THE JEWEL LOT AND THEN IT RETREATED [redacted] AWARD THIS CREATURE BY THE "SLIPPED ROAD SWAMP MONSTER" SINCE HE HAD THE FIRST SIGHTING WITH POLICE INVOLVEMENT. INVESTIGATION TO CONTINUE.

Address Changes

Date	Time	Local and Address	User
2/20/2019	02:49:24	JEWEL/OSCO / COUNTRY CLUB RD / LEAH LN	TM
2/20/2019	02:49:33	JEWEL/OSCO / 11600 COUNTRY CLUB RD	RM

Priority Changes
No Priority Changes

Alarm Level Changes

The incident detail report provided by the McHenry County Sheriff's Office. Personal details have been redacted to protect privacy. *(Singular Fortean Society)*

The witness was so startled by her experience that she almost collided with the bridge's guard rail. *(top)*

The witness said the creature was gliding at "tree-top altitude" prior to heading in her direction.

(bottom) (Emily Wayland / Singular Fortean Society)

EPILOGUE

"Sometimes I am a collector of data, and only a collector, and am likely to be gross and miserly, piling up notes, pleased with merely numerically adding to my stores. Other times I have joys, when unexpectedly coming upon an outrageous story that may not be altogether a lie, or upon a macabre little thing that may make some reviewer of my more or less good works mad. But always there is present a feeling of unexplained relations of events that I note, and it is this far-away, haunting, or often taunting, awareness, or suspicion, that keeps me piling on."

- Charles Fort; Wild Talents.

Much of the dust kicked up by the enormous wings of Lake Michigan's Mothman has settled, now that we're nearing the end of 2019, although this investigation doesn't seem to be the kind that is ever truly over and reports continue to trickle in. As a result, you will likely hear a number of opinions about this case from a variety of sources, both celebrities and small outfits, but only the people I have specifically mentioned as speaking to witnesses or otherwise investigating these reports ever actually did so—at least so far. I hope you will take that into consideration when sifting through the seemingly endless perspectives available.

As for the phenomenon itself, there isn't much to say. Those hoping for a revelation from me revealing its true nature will be sorely disappointed. I could say that I think the potentially paranormal cases represent the manifestation of Keel's "ultraterrestrials"; a glimpse into the ecology of beings who exist beyond our understanding and interact with us through the medium of consciousness. But I have no proof. So, we're left to speculate.

I can't shake that "feeling of unexplained relations of events" noted so eloquently by Charles Fort in *Wild Talents*. There's some aspect of this phenomenon that is enormous and just out of sight, a depth of paranormality concealed beneath the surface of consensus reality. And it touches everything, connecting it—UFOs, ghosts, cryptids, magick, all of it. A common explanation for faeries used to be that they were the souls of the dead. What if we actually can become faeries when we die? What if we can become mothmen?

What if that connective force just beneath the surface is

consciousness itself: a universal consciousness that our brains merely act as antennae to receive, and upon which our personalities and unique consciousnesses are imprinted like waves in an ocean; individual, yet still part of the whole. Sensory organs for the universe to experience itself. Keel called this force the “superspectrum.” What if, once we fully realize the inherent abilities thereof, we become privy to vast new expanses of existence and probability? Whole new vistas of post-human experience would reveal themselves.

I am adrift on this ocean as surely as anything else; synchronicities and strange events followed me even more than usual during the investigation’s height. New leads appeared seemingly out of nowhere. Often, I would catch a glimpse of some half-hidden figure or figures. When I looked directly at them, they appeared to be made of shadow, and after a few seconds they would vanish from sight. They appeared to be watching me, or at least that was my impression. I also swear I saw more sandhill cranes walking around than ever before in my life, but I’m willing to give climate change at least partial credit for that.

Perhaps what we’re dealing with is a species more native than we to this hidden reality, a being or beings with an unimaginably expansive reach, wielding power too vast for us to understand, and capable of effortless manipulation. Like a shark they effortlessly traverse this ocean in all dimensions, utterly alien to our understanding, while we are doomed to flounder. Maybe there’s something that we call faeries or ghosts or extraterrestrials, but is something else entirely; something with which humanity has been interacting for a very long time that has, at different times, gone by many different names, or has at least been interpreted by us in many different ways. In this ecology of consciousness there might be a variety of inhabitants, of whom any may or may not have been misidentified to some extent throughout the ages. I still allow for the individualization of paranormal phenomena; I’m open to the idea of human consciousness surviving bodily death, after all. However, human consciousnesses—whether currently inhabiting a body or not—could represent a relatively minor portion of the population.

The truth of this being or beings is completely unknown or, far more unsettlingly, perhaps it is unknowable. Not because it’s impossible for the human mind to comprehend it, but rather, because they don’t want us

to know. I never could shake the feeling that the influx of large migratory birds into the area was just too convenient. It seemed like a smokescreen or camouflage; something to cause confusion, sow discord. Fort's "Cosmic Trickster" covering its tracks, or simply playing tricks to drive us crazy. The opposite could also be true, given the outcome. Maybe those birds were to get our attention, to push people to make reports that would lead to other, weirder reports. I can't help but wonder if some of those witnesses were manipulated into mistaking a heron for Mothman.

Ultimately, I don't know. None of us do. Every time I feel like I get closer to an answer, a dozen questions are revealed instead. In fact, just between you and me, anyone who claims to have definitive answers as to the nature of any truly paranormal phenomenon is begging for my distrust. Any honest investigator will tell you that the field of paranormal research is still too new and too weird, and that we are only now attaining an understanding of the basic mechanics of the universe necessary for us to even properly study it. But that's the nature of this business—only charlatans and madmen claim a monopoly on truth. If I know anything, though, it is this: monsters and spirits are real in the sense that we experience them. I can't yet tell you the true nature of these experiences, but I can tell you that the witnesses with whom I've spoken gave reports authentic to their experience, whatever meaning that will prove to hold, and I can promise you that I will keep trying to find out what's really happening until I'm satisfied with the answer. That's the best I can do—the best any of us can do.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tobias Wayland is a passionate fortean who has been actively investigating the unusual for over a decade; the first several years of his investigative career were spent as a MUFON field investigator, and following that he investigated independently prior to becoming the head writer and editor for The Singular Fortean Society.

Tobias is a frequent guest on various podcasts and radio shows, has contributed to several books on the paranormal, and is often invited to speak at paranormal conferences and events. He was also featured in the Small Town Monsters documentary Terror in the Skies for his work investigating Mothman sightings around Lake Michigan. He and his wife Emily have been involved with the Lake Michigan Mothman investigation since its advent in the spring of 2017, and are currently the only investigators to have conducted onsite investigations combined with witness interviews across multiple states.

His years as an investigator have served him best by illustrating that when it comes to the anomalous, the preternatural, and the paranormal, any answers he’s found are still hopelessly outnumbered by questions.

[AC1]unsure what this term means as average reader

[AC2]Break in profesisonalism to say I LOL'ed at this. hahahaha!
[AC3]This is a layout thing, but I assume you'll have a map of all the sighting locations? I am dying to see it and how close they all are to one another.
[AC4]I hope we get to see the drawing!
[AC5]I hope we get to see this drawing! Just making a note in case it gets inserted for easy finding.
[AC6]include sketch in layout?